TO HELL WITH THE GIANTS

A synopsis for a play inspired by Don Quixote

Form: A play / a free stage adaptation\
Length: 24 scenes\
Characters: Hedda, Julian, Radio-Man, Morsche\
Setting: A theatre in a small city, a radio studio — and other spaces that come into being as soon as someone steps into them\
Starting point: Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*

Pitch

Four people get together to read *Don Quixote*.

At first, it's mostly a game: with language, knights, windmills, grand gestures, and the question of how you bring a four-hundred-year-old text to the stage.

But as they read, something begins to shift.

Hedda and Julian are working on a project together, yet they find themselves drifting further apart. Radio-Man, initially a voice from the radio who mainly narrates and comments from the sidelines, encounters Morsche, who reads the old text against the grain. Out of four different ways of seeing the world, a shared movement slowly begins to emerge.

To Hell with the Giants isn't about finding the right way to understand *Don Quixote*. Quite the opposite: the text

comes alive precisely because its characters can't agree on what they're looking at.

A chair becomes a horse, then a boat. A basketball becomes a globe. A book becomes something with weight. A letter becomes the ground beneath your feet, and eventually a sail.

And at some point, four people set off.

Not because they know where they're going.

But because they are no longer travelling alone.

The Story

In the theatre, people read, experiment and play. A chair becomes Rocinante. A banana and a scarf turn into a lance and breakfast. Ancient knightly names provoke an unexpected burst of laughter. The world of the novel begins to spill out of its pages and into the room.

Then Radio-Man arrives. From his tiny radio universe, he tells the story of Don Quixote with grand announcements, dry digressions, and a peculiar gift for turning legends back into human beings. As he speaks, Julian builds a ship's prow out of chairs. Great heroic deeds shrink to a trembling knee, a badly hammered nail, a man alone in a stable.

Hedda withdraws. A book glides through the darkness from one half of the stage to the other. For Radio-Man, it's Don Quixote. For Hedda, it becomes something of her own: an object with weight, perhaps something that can hold.

Morsche appears. On her desk is a note: “Make Don Quixote even more Quixotic.” She turns questions around, rearranges sentences, picks up other people's thoughts as if they were weights. “Fair lady” becomes “companion in my unrest”. Translation becomes physical labour.

And somewhere in between, a basketball rolls through the darkness. For Julian, it's a ball. For Hedda, it becomes a globe. Russia. Mexico. Perhaps Toboso.

The four move closer to one another without ever quite reaching each other. Radio and theatre: two spaces, two different movements. One voice declares that imagination isn't a mistake. Another answers: perhaps not — unless you're afraid to look. They move, and they miss each other.

Then the Echo Engine takes shape. A sentence from *Don Quixote* passes through different voices. It becomes solemn, immediate, crooked, strange, familiar again. No single translation wins out. A sentence returns — and this time, it finds its mark.

Hedda tells Julian about her father. About wanting to be seen. About a book he started but never finished. She asks whether you can carry on when the person you're doing something for isn't looking.

Julian stays.

Later, Radio-Man literally gets tangled up in cables and tape as he leaves the radio behind. Julian helps him get free. Morsche carries an enormous letter like a rucksack.

Hedda and Morsche talk about flying without taking flight. The letter slides across the floor. It's heavy. But its weight has changed.

By the end, the enormous letter lies in the middle of the room. All four lift it together. They climb aboard. For a moment, it is no longer a letter but something that carries them.

Then they move on.

A cable lies across their path. The chairs are rearranged. The way is clear. Morsche detaches the screen from its enormous frame and holds it up like a sail.

The four laugh and leave the stage.

All that remains is the empty wooden frame.

The Characters

Hedda sees images and possibilities in things and words. A basketball can become a globe; Sancho's island can become a world of her own. At the same time, she carries the desire to be seen by her father. As the play unfolds, she begins to stop waiting for someone else's gaze.

Julian thinks with his body. He builds, walks, trains, stumbles and tries again. A chair becomes a horse, a ship's prow or an obstacle. What he first understands with his hands, he gradually learns to understand by listening, too.

Radio-Man begins as the voice from the off: narrator, commentator, master of the digression. He can turn a grand legend into a trembling knee. Eventually, he has to leave his radio behind — and discovers that he, too, can get tangled up.

Morsche turns questions around. She doesn't want to correct *Don Quixote*, but to make him even more Quixotic. She thinks in reversals, resistance and direction. And she, too, discovers that sometimes you don't find your bearings by thinking, but by moving on with other people.

Four different ways of seeing the world. None of them is abandoned in the end.

They simply begin to take one another along.

Intention

To Hell with the Giants grew out of an encounter with *Don Quixote*, but it isn't a play about finding the “right” interpretation of the novel. Cervantes' characters become playmates for the present day, in a world where reality and imagination, reading and action, knowledge and not-knowing constantly slip into one another.

At its centre is a question: what happens when people hear the same sentence and find something different in it? The play is less interested in resolving a misunderstanding than in the possibility of continuing to play with it.

That's why the differences between the four characters are more than personality traits. They determine how each of

them thinks on stage: Hedda through images and perception, Julian through action and material, Radio-Man through storytelling and reduction, Morsche through reversal and orientation. Only as the play unfolds do these different ways of thinking begin to work together.

The theatre space itself is not merely a setting. It thinks alongside the characters. Objects can change their meaning without being replaced: a chair becomes a horse, a basketball a globe, a book an object with weight, a letter the ground beneath their feet and then a sail. What begins as an idea between the characters suddenly acquires physical substance.

Perhaps this is also where the play's deepest connection to *Don Quixote* lies. Not in having to decide whether Don Quixote sees the world correctly or incorrectly. But in the possibility that another way of seeing can actually change the world — at least for a moment, and sometimes long enough to keep going.

The play doesn't believe that everyone will end up speaking the same language. It places its faith in something more difficult, and perhaps more straightforward: that people who inhabit different realities can travel a stretch of the road together.

Or, as the play itself puts it:

Not because someone knows the way.

But because someone sets off.