



THE
DRAMA INTERVIEW

Drama Editor Ezra Neighbors with Kevin B.

Kevin, thank you for taking the time to submit to Fleas on The Dog and share The Borochi with us.

EN: *When did you realize you loved to tell stories?*

KB: When I was a child, I was always very theatrical and dramatic. I would always try to get people's attention whatever way I could. When I was in elementary school, I discovered theater, and that became a way of storytelling. In college, I began writing and that started a lifelong love of finding ways to create entire worlds through playwriting or prose.

EN: *Were there any early inspirations of other storytellers that influenced you?*

KB: I think I'm still heavily influenced by authors I loved as a child. Anytime I write something like "The Borochi," I see so much Roald Dahl in it. Just that warped sense of good and evil with characters you love in spite of their faults. There's a darkness in all his work that pulls the reader in, and even when I was younger, I remember appreciating that he trusted me, the reader, with being able to handle stepping into those darker places.

EN: *Do you exercise your storytelling just in playwriting, or are there other mediums you practice in?*

KB: I began writing prose regularly during the pandemic, and now I write at least one short story a week. I've also begun writing poetry, which was always the form that scared me the most. In the new year, I'm hoping to devote a lot more time to that.

EN: *Here at FOTD, we receive submissions from all over the world and set in places both real and fictional. The Borochi is set in a fictional Austrian castle with a South American wolf demon and Bolivian characters. You are from Rhode Island; what led you to deciding on the international location, characters, and demonic wolf?*

KB: I read a story during the pandemic about a real group of musicians trapped in a European castle somewhere on some kind of tour, and it was said that the castle was surrounded by wolves. In the comments section were all these people saying "This should be a movie! This should be a play!" Usually when you see people saying things like that, no play or movie ever gets written. I was determined not to let it go. I wanted to know what was going on in that castle.

EN: *Some of the visceral reactions I had when I read The Borochi were similar to what I felt in the pandemic. Entrapment, fear, confusion, and horror. The suspicions over Cruz coughing also led into these feelings. Did the pandemic impact your view of the world as an artist? How so?*

KB: It absolutely did. I don't know how it wouldn't. The work I create now is very different from the work I was creating prior to the pandemic. I think ever since 2016 (and maybe a little earlier), there's been a pervasive sense of things getting worse—whether that be due to polarization, politics, the climate crisis, etc. The pandemic felt like a culmination of a lot of fears and, at the same time, it felt like it was also an opportunity for the world to reset itself. The play is about that feeling of being unable to escape a dire situation, but I feel as though each of the

characters in it is also presented with the chance to come to terms with what's been holding them back both as artists and human beings.

EN: *In what ways did COVID impact the stories you are telling now?*

KB: I find it difficult to write quirky stories now. I used to love being as off-kilter as possible when I would write plays. I'm a great admirer of Sarah Ruhl. She was sort of everyone's favorite playwright when I was first developing my identity in college as someone who might write for the theater. Her worlds were so clear and believable while at the same time operating under their own set of rules. A lot of my early work mirrored that approach, and now I find that even when I tell stories that are somewhat fantastical, I keep finding myself grounded in reality. I'm not sure when I'll be able to shake that, but I hope I do eventually. I don't dislike the work I create now, but I can tell that it's highly affected by my surroundings in a way I'm not entirely comfortable with, although that could change when I look back on it someday.

EN: *Despite having blood, guts, and gore (which I adore), The Borochi offers many moments of humor, surrealism, and a touch of absurdity. How do you find balance between the comedic and the dramatic?*

KB: For me, so much of that balance is negotiated as you're trying to figure out what kind of change is happening in the story, and which characters are either resisting that change when they should be learning to accept it or accepting that change too easily when they should be pushing back. The dramatic moments in the story are born out of a surreality that I think lends itself more to comedy, and in that way, it was a little easier injecting comedy into the piece when I felt it needed it.

EN: *If I could take a peek at Kevin B's recently read list, what would I find? What playwrights have you been drawn to lately?*

KB: I've been doing this crazy project for two years where I'm going back and reading every play that's ever been nominated for (or won) the Tony award for Best Play. I've discovered some real gems that I can't believe aren't produced anymore. That aside, I read Tom Stoppard all the time. I don't think there's a smarter living playwright. Lucas Hnath is also a big favorite, along with Jocelyn Bioh, Will Arbery, and Samuel D. Hunter.

EN: *Are there any pieces you are currently working on?*

KB: Yes, I just completed a play about two sisters. One can't lie and the other can't tell the truth.

EN: *Lastly, what words of advice would you give to someone just starting out on the path to being a dramatist?*

KB: Write every single day even when what you're writing is garbage. The garbage is where you learn to be a writer. I've learned very little from the writing I've done that succeeded. I learned a lot more from the failures.

*Thank you again for sharing The Borochoi with us, and for taking the time to sit in the hot seat!
Good luck with your future writing!*