

On the Stage: "The Adoration of Dora Maar"

Karissa Elliot | Posted: Monday, March 2, 2015 1:26 pm

Upon entering The Idiom Theater for "The Adoration of Dora Maar," I was struck by the bulbous and violently red paint upon the floor, creating a flesh-like atmosphere.

Lining the walls were vast quantities, perhaps hundreds, of eclectic objects. A sword, a bundle of peacock feathers, a globe, an antique doll, and of course, painting and framing materials.

The script, by Lojo Simon, explores the life of Dora Maar, one of Picasso's muses and lovers, from the perspective of how her individuality and her own art were ignored, cast aside or pulverized by the world.



Scene from "Adoration"

An all-female cast of a woman's script, directed by a woman, Shu-Ling Hergenbahn-Zaho, this show strives to portray all aspects of womanhood, both positive and negative. Dora herself is actually played by two women. One represents Dora's physical self, played by Cass Murphy. The other represents Maar, the unconscious self, played by Becky Byrd.

This cast performed a challenging variance of emotions admirably. Murphy and Byrd were both incredibly vulnerable and open onstage, baring their bodies and the characters' deepest emotions. The two acted as mirrors to each other, in appearance and in the way they betrayed each other's inner thoughts, and the disputes between the two were particularly emotionally charged and compelling. Murphy's spectrum was especially truthful in the way she allowed the other characters to affect Dora.

Bridget Sievers, playing Marie-Therese, a woman who bore Picasso a child, was alone in the cast in presenting characteristics rather than fighting to achieve her goals. Meanwhile, the three women playing Dora's friends also played an entire chorus of seeming stereotypes of other people: museum visitors, prostitutes, dictators, and Picasso, changing characters in moments.

The clunkiest part of this show was the scene transitions. The scenes were so artfully designed that the break into complicated set changes, and the resulting break in character, took me from the world of the play. During these same moments, relevant pieces of Dora's or Picasso's art was projected onto the walls, allowing the audience to make connections between the play and the art. This art was almost always meaningful, so in the cases when it wasn't, it became distracting.

This play shone the most in its least realistic moments. Because there were no men in the play, Dora

spent half a scene interacting with an invisible Picasso, before one of her friends became a narrator of Picasso's responses, finally and seamlessly assuming his role in the scene.

“The Adoration of Dora Maar” took me on an emotional ride through the life of a woman neglected both in her time and ours.

The show runs through March 8 at the Idiom Theater on Cornwall. Tickets are \$10 online (www.idiomtheater.com/tickets) or \$12 at the door. This play is 18+ and contains nudity, profanity, and violence.