

The Lorca Woman

Olga Kravtsova

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Committee:

Jeffrey Fracé

Valerie Curtis-Newton

Scott Hafso

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University of Washington

Abstract

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Olga Kravtsova

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Jeffrey Fracé

School of Drama

The Lorca Woman is a piece about a woman's journey through the obstacles of life and social barriers in order to gain acceptance from "the audience" and herself. This piece explores the ability of women to wear many faces, and to take up different roles depending on what the situation asks of them. This process explores both societal and familial pressures which women constantly face. *The Lorca Woman* piece unfolds the moment when an important decision needs to be made and what personalities inside the woman are coming to life; the characters summoned by the pressures above. The presented piece is a work in progress, an abstract depiction inspired by the play *The House of Bernarda Alba* by F.G. Lorca.

Olga Kravtsova

Graduate Thesis — *Lorca Woman*

Jeffrey Fracé

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While working on my final solo show piece at UW grad school, my intention was to utilize the tools that I found especially useful in my art-making process. My aim was to start working on the material that had been attracting my attention for years: the play by F.G. Lorca, *House of Bernarda Alba*. I was curious to investigate my attraction to that play using what I love: the crafting of a movement and character-based piece. I wanted to invite the audience to experience a deep dive into the subterranean world of the characters and discover the secrets that they had kept hidden from the outside world. I was inspired by the trapped feeling of Lorca's play and the suffering that the characters needed to overcome to escape from the house ruined by the imperious Bernarda Alba.

In this paper I will mostly focus on the acting elements of the show. As one of the main goals of the PATP program is to become a better actor, I won't go into details discussing some elements of my thesis show, such as costumes, set design and technical support of the live performance (accuracy of the sound, light, volume level). Those elements played an important role in the show, but I had less ability to execute my vision because of a lack of resources and a

lack of directorial knowledge. As an actor, one of my goals in this project was portraying multiple characters in one piece through physical acting and exploring transformation from one to another very contrasting character. Below I will talk about elements of my show and what classes let me learn tools for those elements.

The first essential element of my work was character development. *Lorca Woman* includes 6 characters that are very distinct and different. In my work, one of the major skills that I used was physical acting and character building. I can track an influence from Jeffrey Fracé's Suzuki class. I was playing with tension and the physical restrictions that were underneath delivery of the text. I used imagery to create perspective on stage and worked with the distance element that we practiced in Suzuki class.

When constructing characters, I relied heavily on classes taught by Bridget Connors, such as Archetypes, Voice, and M. Chekhov technique. Finding archetypal light and shadow sites, finding character's voice, and gestures that represent their will, was a consistent skill that I used through the work. While experimenting with the material I practiced archetypal journeys similar to those learned in Bridget's class. I used M. Chekhov psychological gestures during *Beggar Woman* and *Bernarda* development. I also explored molding, flying, radiating movement qualities while working on the *María Josefa* character. Bridget's voice class helped me to find distinct voices for each character, and I feel there is more potential work in that area.

Another essential element of my work is the process of devising. I had an opportunity to learn and practice how to construct devised pieces multiple times in grad school, which influenced my taste and aesthetics. My first experience was the *Myth* project in Bridget Connors class (PATP year 1), then I had an independent study with Jeffrey Frace (PATP year 1) where I worked on *A Lie of The Mind* play by Sam Shepard in the lighting lab room. My experiments

continued with an independent project, “*One at a Time*,” where I devised a 20-minute piece on the staircase of Hutchinson Hall and invited faculty for feedback. During year 1, I discovered a passion for devised/crafted work, simple design (with an accent on lights and sound), and multimedia mix, including visual projections. During year 2 (PATP year 2), I had a chance to learn from Adrienne Mackey in the Generative Artist class and Valerie Curtis-Newton in Mono Drama classes. I explored how I can support my creative process, but also was given a structure that can help me organize the devising process. During Spring quarter of year 2, I learned from Jeffrey Fracé's class how to adapt a novel into the stage performance, which led to creating *Old Man* short work. I performed that piece at 12MM in the Base Space and Spring Shot in 18th and Union in Seattle. It continued its life by being selected for the Fertile Ground Festival in Portland and Oregon Fringe Festival in Spring 2024. During my 2nd year I learned that the research stage of my work asks for time, conversations, and inspirational brainstorming. At this point, I am excited the most about working with a collaborator rather than a large creative group or by myself. My next step in devised work will be to practice and create more work, and I am looking forward to continuing to do so after graduating from UW.

The third important element of my piece is worldbuilding. Working with the audience is one part of this process.. Inspired by Catherine Maiden and her Alexander technique class, I explored the possibilities of inviting an audience into an intimate space to share the characters' journeys. In my process, I also experimented with my characters' senses and impulses. For example, the Beggar Woman character had a constant desire to go on the ground, and only when she got to the floor (“the bottom of life”), she felt in the right place. In my next iteration, I will explore interactive elements with the audience to bring more structure to the piece and clarify the story of the characters.

While I was exploring the material, I used the knowledge that I learned from Andrew D. Smith during our lighting lab class. It was important for me to create a visually distinct space on stage so that I could inhabit this world with my characters. From the lighting lab, I learned that different angles of lights would create a hierarchy within the characters. Feelings that we get from the character could be sculpted by the quality of light. During the lighting lab class I learned how to use lighting as a one of tools in my process of worldbuilding. I think, in the next iteration of the show, I want to explore only on-stage lamps and lights so I can have more control over the effect that light has on space and characters. I was unable to present the shadows element in my *Lorca Woman* piece because of the tech limitations of this project.

In addition to light, I tried shaping the space with sound and music. In my process, I worked with the text to find essence words from each character. I utilized the tools I learned from Bridget Connors during her Shakespeare class for this task. I used the rhythm and tempo of the text so that I could develop sound design that would support each character and further enhance the worldbuilding. Ultimately, I used songs by Vince Clark, Fire!Orchestra, Eduard Artyemyev, Emptyset, and Jason Okamoto, who also arranged voice recordings that I used in the show and wrote original songs. In lieu of a more complex set, the intention of my sound and light design was to create a dynamic world which the characters would inhabit.

Exploring *Lorca Woman* was an exciting experiment for me. I want to reflect on some elements that I think worked and some that needed more investigation/work. If I decide to continue to work on this piece I would keep developing the voice/ambient sound/music element of it. I think it has potential to be a voice only piece and music could be created only out of the sound of the characters' voices. I would also need to work more on the connecting tissue between the characters. I would need to find a way to show their relationship (a family) and

strong need for each other that ties them together and keeps them in the house. *Lorca Woman* material is still a mystery for me and I am hoping to unravel this puzzle in the future. I am grateful that I expanded my creative language in grad school so I can utilize tools that I learned there to create my work.

Lorca Woman

A drama of a women

By Olga Kravtsova

TIME: Now

PLACE: Heritage house. Space will be crafted by the lights and music instead of set.

CHARACTERS:

Bernarda, Forceful Woman, aged sixty

Beggar woman, Victim Woman, any age

María Josefa, (Bernarda's mother), Infantile Woman, aged eighty

Angustias, (Bernarda's daughter), God-fearing Woman, aged thirty-nine

La Poncia (a servant), Wit Woman, aged sixty

Adela, (Bernarda's daughter), Demoniac Woman, aged twenty

NOTE: All characters are played by the same woman

Lorca Woman

There is a door in the frame upstage right, a black cube covered with the red velcro material in the middle and a toy ship on the floor next to the cube.

Sound of train. From the darkness a figure with the hanging light appears. She gets on the train.

Bernarda appears at the entrance to the stage. She wears a coat that gives us a military/traveler vibe. She walks to the middle of the stage and steps on the cube before starting the speech.

BERNARDA: Through the eight years of mourning, not a breeze shall enter this house. The doors and windows will be sealed with bricks. That's how it was in my father's house and my grandfather's.

Do you hear me? Everything is as it should be in this house. My vigilance guards against all. My daughters can breathe tranquility. I keep to my place, in peace. So you're saying nothing. The fact is there's nothing to say. I'm utterly certain! Nothing will happen. I'm alert to all your suspicions. Don't bother.

Bernarda takes off the coat and drops it on the floor transforming into the Beggar woman character.

BEGGAR WOMAN: *(Hides behind the cube)* Spare some change, kind souls? Spare a coin for a poor woman? *(She looks around, searching for someone to help her)* Please, I haven't eaten in days. The hunger gnaws at my stomach, a constant reminder of my desperation. *(She approaches the audience)*. Excuse me, could you spare a few coins? Just enough to buy a loaf of bread, to ease the ache in my belly. *(Audience ignore her)* May God have mercy on your souls. *(She continues to wander, her voice filled with weariness)* I have walked these streets for years, invisible to those who pass me by. Forgotten, discarded like a piece of trash. But I am still here, clinging to life, hoping for a glimmer of kindness. *(She spots an audience person)* Little one, could you spare a coin? *(Audience member doesn't respond)* No one wants to see the suffering of others. They turn a blind eye, pretending not to notice. But I am here, a reminder of the fragility of life, of the injustices that exist in this world. I have become a ghost, haunting these streets, begging for scraps, begging for a chance to survive. But no one listens, no one cares. Perhaps

one day, someone will see me. Perhaps one day, someone will offer a helping hand. Until then, I will continue to wander, a forgotten soul in a world that has left me behind.

Beggar woman coming out to the middle downstage. Transformation to Maria Josefa - old woman.

MARÍA JOSEFA: Bernarda! Bernarda! Let me out! Open the door for me! (she turns her head) Where's my shawl? You don't need anything of mine, not my rings, and not my black moiré dress, because none of you will ever be married. Not one! I wish to marry a handsome young man from the seashore... Let me go out, Bernarda!

Who are you? What are you doing here? I escaped. Who are you?

This is mine. Why shouldn't a lamb be a child? It's better to have a lamb than nothing at all. Because I've white hair, you think I can't have a child, but I can: children, children, and more children. This child will be clothed in white, and there'll be another child and another and they'll all be snow-white, and we'll be like the waves, every one of us. Then we'll know everything, and our heads will be white, and we'll be sea-foam. Here, there are only mourning shawls. Hush, hush.

She's rocking the toy as a baby and mumbling a lullaby. She places the toy wrapped with cloth on the floor next to the cube.

We hear the sound of gossip in the different areas of the audience. Transformation to the Angustias.

ANGUSTIAS: You know they don't like me.

BERNARDA: Each sees into their own heart. I never pry into hearts, but I desire a united front and family harmony. Do you understand?

ANGUSTIAS: Yes.

BERNARDA: Then that's fine.

BERNARDA: What time did you finish talking to Pepe last night?

ANGUSTIAS: Twelve-thirty.

BERNARDA: What does Pepe have to say?

ANGUSTIAS: He seems distracted. He talks to me as if he's thinking of something else. If I ask him what's on his mind, he just says: 'We men have our own worries.'

BERNARDA: You shouldn't ask him; that's even more true when you're married. Speak if he speaks, and look at him when he looks at you. You'll be better off that way.

ANGUSTIAS: I think he hides a great deal from me.

BERNARDA: Don't try and find out what it is, don't question him, and, above all, don't let him ever see you cry.

ANGUSTIAS: I should be happy and I'm not.

BERNARDA: It's no matter.

ANGUSTIAS: I often gaze at Pepe through the bars of the window, and his image is blurred, as if he were cloaked in a shroud of dust thrown up by his sheep.

BERNARDA: You're not well, that's all.

ANGUSTIAS: I hope it's that!

BERNARDA: Is he here tonight?

ANGUSTIAS: No. He's gone to the city with his mother.

The sound of the gossip falls on Angustias like pouring from a bucket of cold water and she falls down.

ANGUSTIAS: (Drily) I'm fine, and anyone who doesn't like it can go to the devil. Fortunately, I'll soon be free of this hell. And, besides, better an ounce of gold in one's coffer than a pair of dark eyes in one's head!

Angustias runs away through the door upstage.

Ponsia comes out of the door.

LA PONSIA: For thirty years I've laundered her sheets; for thirty years I've eaten her leftovers; spent nights awake when she had a cough; whole days peering through the cracks to spy on the neighbors and bring her the news; there are no secrets between us, and yet I curse her! May needles prick out her eyes! But I'm a good bitch and bark when I'm told, and bite the heels of the beggars when she whips me on; my sons work her fields and they're both married too, but one day I'll have had enough. And then... Then I'll lock myself in a room with her, and spit on for her a year. Bernarda, here's for this, and that, and the other,' until she looks like a lizard the

children squashed, because that's what she is, and all her family. I don't envy her life. She's five women on her hands, five ugly daughters. Their only inheritance is bread and water. (*Sound of a whip*) And we have our hands, and we'll have a hole in God's earth.

Transformation into Adela.

ADELA: You've seen he loves me. There's no remedy here. Whoever must drown will drown. Pepe el Romano is mine. He will take me to the rushes by the shore.

I can't stand the horror of living under this roof, having tasted the sweetness of his mouth. I'll be whatever he wants me to be. With the whole village against me; scorched by their tongues of fire, hounded by those who call themselves decent people, I'll stand before them all with a crown of thorns on my brow, the one that a woman loved by a married man wears. What can you say of me? That I lock myself in my room and won't open the door? That I don't sleep? I'm cleverer than you. See if you can catch this hare in your hands. Gazing into his eyes I feel as if I'm slowly drinking his blood. I was afraid of you. But now I'm stronger than you!

Adela wrapping herself into the red velcro material transforming into dead rock. Bernarda bursting out of the red cloth.

BERNARDA: Silence, I said! I knew the storm was coming, but I didn't expect it so soon. Ay! What a shower of stones rains down on my heart! But I'm not an old woman yet and I've halters for all five of you and this house that my father built so that not even the weeds will know my desolation. Get out of here! (They leave. Bernarda sits desolate. La Poncia stands near the wall. Bernarda composes herself, bangs her stick down and speaks) I shall have to take a firm grip! Remember, Bernarda, it's your duty!

Sound of the train. Bernarda puts on the coat and leaves the stage.