Stagestruck: Latin Roots

Leonora and Alejandro

By Chris Rohmann  Nov 8, 2018

Stacy Klein, founder and co-director of Ashfield-based Double Edge Theatre, says the company’s ongoing Latin American Cycle was inspired, three years ago, by an interest in the Franco-Chilean filmmaker (and all-round renaissance man) Alejandro Jodorowsky. “Yet as the 2016 election approached,” she says, with “so much misogyny laid bare, I realized that I could not make any more performances without a woman as a central figure.”

Thus her latest work, Leonora and Alejandro, which was premiered earlier this year and is performed in an intimate indoor setting at the troupe’s Ashfield farm, Nov. 9-11 and 16-18. It’s about Jodorowsky and the Anglo-Mexican painter/sculptor/mystic Leonora Carrington. The two met in Mexico City and worked together for some time, stimulated by a shared commitment to surrealism and experimentation. He sought her out, according to one source, because his Buddhist teacher told him he needed to explore his “feminine side.”

Jodorowsky is best known for his surrealist films, notably the 1970 “acid western” El Topo. Carrington was a free-spirited advocate of personal, sexual, spiritual and political liberty. Her long, adventurous life included narrow escapes from the Nazis, serial marriages, an acute psychotic break and founding membership in Mexico’s Women’s Liberation Movement.

The subtitle of Leonora and Alejandro is “La Maga y el Maestro,” which could be translated “The Sorceress and the Auteur.” Klein describes the work, co-created with the Double Edge company, as depicting “the magic, mystery, and humanity” that suffuses both artists’ work. “Yet the way it is painted and imagined is without doubt mine and the ensemble’s own invention.”

The premiere of the one-hour piece last spring in New Jersey was praised by The New York Times as “a hallucinatory, symbol-heavy tour of Carrington’s fervid mind” that traces the porous border “between reality and dream, conscious and unconscious.” In the title roles are “the sensational Jennifer Johnson” and Carlos Uriona, “a hybrid of psychedelic magician and glam-rock shaman.”

Leonora and Alejandro photos by Maria Baranova-Suzuki & Marina Levitskaya