

Montreal Hour



The quixotic life

Robyn Fadden, Nov. 20th, 2008

From comedy to heavy reality, Dulcinea's Lament tells it like it is and might have been

Solo shows might just be the most difficult for any artist to pull off - and for any viewer to watch. All that pressure on one person, on one stage, illuminated in the dark. In the case of Dulcinea Langfelder's solo production *Dulcinea's Lament*, we have no need to worry - we are in the hands of a professional. And her abs are rock-solid too.

Dulcinea Langfelder - actor, dancer, singer, writer - has brought her dynamic solo show to Montreal, with the help of director Alice Ronfard and a number of others who've taken care of music, design, video, lighting and, of course, the running joke: "props." And she's made sure that their presence is clear - the fourth wall is less broken than shattered. Which makes sense, because, in many ways, this is our story too, such is its universality. By the end, I'm pretty sure most people wanted to hug, or at the very least hang out with, this woman at the show's centre.

Langerfelder plays both herself and Dulcinea del Toboso, the muse in Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, the muse (who may or may not have really existed) in whose name Quixote decides to save the world. He does make his presence known too: in a man-sized, almost-translucent white plastic and paper puppet who does in fact look like the iconic paintings - a heavy sketch of a travellin' man, though here he is without his horse. Four "stagehands" dressed in black are his puppeteers (one, Vincent Santes, is the man behind the creation), rendering the figure into



a true character who at times engages in conversation (albeit often one-sided) with Dulcinea. Dulcinea del Toboso may be the muse and the production's focus, but her existence is constantly tied to Quixote.

Dulcinea Langfelder doesn't let that dynamic slip by without questioning it, and with each of the piece's short acts, she expounds on men's and women's symbiotic roles throughout history. From goddesses to warmongers, the world's myths, legends and historical figures are told through music, dance, monologue and video images projected across the stage and on several movable screens. Her spoken word pieces often border on stand-up comedy, musical interludes have a cabaret-like quality, modern references to the Internet put us firmly in our time zone, and some downright beautiful dance pieces using a huge skein of billowing silky white fabric just plain awe. But even during the more interpretive or abstract parts of *Dulcinea's Lament*, there is always a kernel of the real world.

Because ultimately, it would seem, Dulcinea - the character and the artist on stage before us - is herself travelling through a mystery. Yes, it's the mystery of Dulcinea and Don Quixote, but it's also the mystery of our own creation and existence. In the end, the solution remains to continue to strive to understand, but also just to live life in all its joy, hilarity, turmoil and confusion.