

## The Eternal Feminine

She's a one-woman orchestra juggling media, myths and cultures. A little woman using her entire body to create stories filled with poetry and strong images. She's an actress/clown – she reminds me of Giulietta Masina in Fellini films – fixing a gentle, pure and fragile gaze upon the beauty of the world. An American by birth, a Quebecer in her soul, with the warm heart of a Mediterranean, she's a citizen of the world.

Dulcinée Langfelder is all that! But above all she's a talented, unique creator who, in a 25-year career and only six shows, has been pursuing her artistic quest without fanfare, but with constancy and conviction.

In her new play, *Dulcinea's Lament*, presented last Thursday in its French-language premiere, Dulcinée Langfelder personifies a myth that bears her first name: Dulcinea del Toboso. The object of Don Quixote's desires, this fantasy character never actually appears in Cervantes' famous novel. And yet, since the great book first appeared, his Dulcinea has symbolized "*the woman who inspires romantic passion*", the mistress of mistresses.

Dulcinée Langfelder created a show around the theme of Dulcinea and the memory of women who, from Scheherazade to Marilyn Monroe, became feminine icons. "*How to integrate the collective memory of women with our social condition?*" is the artist's question. She explores that feminine universe while admitting to have "*discovered certain things that are not reassuring...*".

Nor is the state of the world reassuring to the artist. A world that, century after century, from the Spanish Inquisition to 9/11, often makes us forget that love is the salt of life.

There are, in this (beautiful) *Lament*, moments of grace. Such as when the actress becomes a tree and sings *Strange Fruit*, the beautiful and terrible poem immortalized by Billie Holiday, about the lynching of blacks in the American South; or when the naked dancer designs arabesques, veiling herself with a simple white sheet.

But if the propos seems dense or tragic, the show is not. Dulcinée Langfelder deftly combines humour, word games and satire. And there are the comings and goings of her four technicians and stage companions. As in a Brecht play, they disarm the dramatic process, in a wonderful connivance between the artist and her team. I'd like to highlight Yves Labelle's magnificent video work, perfectly integrated with Langfelder's storytelling and body art. Kudos too for Philippe Noireault's fine musical direction.

Luc Boulanger, *Le Devoir*, December 10, 2008