

Theater Review

‘Bodas de Sangre’: ruled by primal instincts

El Ingenio Teatro’s production of a classic tragedy is infused with sensuality and lyricism.

BY MIA LEONIN

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In the opening scene of Federico García Lorca’s *Bodas de Sangre* (Blood Wedding), adapted by Cuban playwright Raquel Carrió, a mother tells her grown son, “A man without land is like a tree without roots.” The mother (Marta Velasco) and her son (Jorge Luis Álvarez) are farm people who live psychologically and physically isolated on a remote stretch of land.

This is one of the fascinating paradoxes of Lorca’s classic tragedy: As tethered to the land as the characters are, they are also disturbingly rootless and detached. A feud with a local family that has endured for decades has poisoned the mother’s spirit and threatens to keep her son from happiness. On his wedding day, his bride (Sonya Smith) runs away with her former lover, Leonardo (Gabriel Porras) and violence ensues. *Bodas* has always been about man’s inability to ignore his primal instincts. Leonardo and the runaway bride choose their passion above all else, even though it results in their undoing.

Carrió admirably preserves the heart of this tragedy. This combined with Director Lilliam Vega’s keen sense of movement and body language infuses El Ingenio Teatro’s production of *Bodas* with sensuality and lyricism. Performed in Spanish with English supertitles, *Bodas* is currently on stage at the Trail Theater in Coral Gables.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the adaptation is the creation of the character Silveria, a priestess/witch figure excellently portrayed by Rocío Carmona. Silveria appears throughout the production enveloped in mesh and veils. The groom’s mother and the friend of the bride both ask Silveria to perform witchcraft so that the marriage will be successful. Carmona projects the sharp, gravelly voice of a mythological hag. She bows and extends her arms ritualistically, and although her face is never revealed, her presence is chilling.

Sonya Smith is delicate and fierce as Leonardo’s lover and a young bride. Her hands move with the elegant flourish of a flamenco dancer and her aesthetic lines are majestic. Vega situates dancing nymphs throughout the play who move with the grace and stillness of butoh performers. This underscore her sometimes surrealistic vision of *Bodas*.

As the groom, Jorge Luis Álvarez gives a solid performance of a salt-of-the-earth man turned violent by betrayal. Gabriel Porras’ Leonardo exudes the frustration of an unhappily married man who must eke out a living from the earth. Porras’ stage presence and body language feel a bit forced early on, but ultimately his strong personality creates a Leonardo with bravado.

El Ingenio Teatro's production of *Bodas* proposes a more conciliatory ending, which feels a bit superfluous considering the rest of the play largely honors the original story, but this is a hiccup in an otherwise lovely adaptation.