

Kozana Lucca

## Does Hair Exercise My Dramas ?

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All my life and after I am dead, like it or not, obstinately, it grows, day after day - my hair. It plays a very important role in my daily theatre. Who doesn't have fantastic stories to tell about their hair, beard, moustache, sideburns, wig, bald head, dyed hair, braids? And about all the products that make them more beautiful? About cutting them, transforming them? My hair has become a book: *Madame Chevelure* (published in French in 1988 by Arbres de Vie).

My hair is the curtain of the stage of my face. The story began in childhood and even before, with my grandparents, with Brylcream to make hair shine and with stick-on moustaches. I was always very sensitive about my hair and used to scream when it was pulled by someone who was combing it carelessly. Combing my hair was always a slow ceremony for me and as soon as I was able to speak I said *cholata* (myself alone) and took the brush myself.

I went through yin and yang periods: long and free hair, short, tangled, or disorderly hair, plaits. Each important event in my life has provoked a change in my hairstyle, as when scene changes happen during a big opera. My hair is the last wild, savage vestige of my instincts; it is like my ears in the sense that it never sleeps. My hair keeps on growing, it never stops, it never closes up, like my eyes do. Hair grows and dies all the time. It reproduces like antennae listening to the sounds of the cosmos. It is my roots in the sky.

During my adolescence and with my first menstruation, my hair was long, languid, fragile and fine. At university, it was short and strong. For tennis and swimming competitions it was exceedingly short. With my first love it was long, free, waving down to my waist, covering the shyness of my eyes. At the Roy Hart Theatre, it was my greatest partner in a double plait, Indian style. When undone, it fell in blond cascades onto the piano keyboard with feelings of ecstasy and abandonment. When it was up, it went sliding to infinity, following the voice on the octaves, reaching and going beyond the bounds of energy at a high pitch. In *Piantos*, a one woman show, I used to fight with my hair, pulling it or caressing it according to the soft or aggressive words of the tango. When I sang "Put on this wig of birds and fly to passion..."

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I felt like flying high over the rooftops with my hair. In *Seethings* I played Eurydice. My hair was twisted into a bun which undid little by little as the desperation grew at the loss of Orpheus and with his departure to the Underworld. For *Poesis* my hair was in long plaits with multi-coloured ribbons, which felt like long cords of string, while I played the double bass.

In the Caribbean I learned to adorn my hair with flowers on the days of the full moon. From the shamans in Argentina I learned about all the magic that one can do with and through hair.

One of the most powerful events of my life took place in 1985: the doctors had to cut my hair off to stitch my head back together after a car accident. I was immobile for a year, going in and out of hospital and rehabilitation centres. There I tried to transform my painful situation into one of creativity, using calligraphy and letters from friends and family. My fantasies were embodied in poems, paintings, songs, drawings and stories about hair associated with animals, trees, waterfalls, music and the voices of theatre characters. An editor from the south of France recovered these letters (about 600) and we chose 150 of them for the book. It took nine month's work before the book was ready. This book was like a new life for me, a whole world of inspiration for me and others: radio and theatre performances, workshops, lectures and conferences, in different countries ...

A Swedish-Finnish actress, Margret von Martens, came to see me and we worked on the script of the musical tragi-comedy *Caricias*, inspired by the book and by my life. It was fascinating to be a spectator at the different performances of *Caricias* within the context of different cultures. In Finland and in the other Scandinavian countries, the rage of loss and the enchantment of rebirth were expressed in displays of sumptuous costumes and scenery. In the Argentinean production a simple piece of cloth metamorphosed into a forest, seasons,

animals and feelings, accompanied by subtle and savage voices. My heart shrank to see and hear myself in the theatrical actions played by others and to sense the importance that I had given to hair, as if it was the last of my instincts. I was behaving in the opposite way to the Maku Indians from the Amazon forest who remove every single hair from their heads and bodies with the help of piranhas' teeth and wax. Not a single hair should remain on their body, face or head. Otherwise they thought that evil spirits would grab hold of the hair to pull them down into the Underworld.

What a contrast between the full and the empty, between life and death, yin and yang! What a theatrical event is Mary Magdalene washing Christ's feet with her hair and perfume!

There is a great deal to think about in terms of the relationship between hair and voices, character, social contexts, styles of living, history, evolution ... What fascinates me, is how it can participate consciously in theatre work and contribute towards human expansion. I feel that hair symbolises and enhances our sensuality, sexuality, eroticism, transcendence, creativity. I find it fascinating that at the same time and on the same planet, people can sacrifice fortunes and many hours doing diametrically opposed things to make themselves beautiful!

Will I continue to exorcise the dramas of my life through my hair? My companion just died, after 15 years of being together. In the first dream I had after he died, I cut off all my hair as a symbol of sadness ... and that is what I really did. Don't ask me why.

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