

Pablo's Muse

Part historical account, part poetry recital, Pablo's Muse gives us a glimpse of the women in this great poet's life, the entangled nature of life and love, and the questions that remain unanswered.

MARYKA: First wife, soft and naïve, a sense of being passed by in life (prop – 20s style handbag)

DELIA: Second wife, poised but with a sternness of life (prop – 40s hat)

MATHILDE: Third wife, barefoot with elaborate Spanish scarf, free spirited, intelligent, secure (Prop – scarf)

SET: one table, one chair at down centre right.

AFX: The stage is lit with a single centre spot. Three women stand facing away from the audience at stage rear. The first steps forward into the spot and picks up book from table.

MARYKA:

He loved me...Maryka.

Born Ricardo Eliecer Neftalí Reyes Baloalto – the great Chilean poet, My Pablo, Pablo Neruda.

Do you know him? I did.

His mother died two months after his birth.

He was first published at 13. I was not much older when I was pregnant with his child. Mrs Neruda. I was young. Very young. Exotic, but without arts and letters.

I always felt he wrote for me...

(reads from book) With a chaste heart, With pure eyes I celebrate your beauty, holding the leash of blood, so that it might leap out and trace your outline where you lie down in my Ode, as in a land of forests or in surf In aromatic loam, or in sea music.

He wrote that in green pen – that was his symbol of hope.

My part in his history feels not much more than the scratchings of a twig on the dusty roads of Santiago.

We lived so many places. Java where we met, Colombo, Madrid, Rangoon. I was Dutch and tall. I spoke little Spanish. It didn't seem to matter so much then.

The poetry...it wasn't really for me, it was for life, for all women, for his people.
I wondered 'would he have written more or less if I had been more or less?'

We divorced in 1936, not long after our daughter died.

(Places book on table, steps back)

DELIA:

He loved me. *(Steps forward to spot and picks up book)*

We were opposites. What was absent in me seemed to pour from him, and in return I filled his spaces.

I was twenty years older.

In Barcelona, in 1943 he said, 'Marry me, Delia'. We were communists, writers, campaigners, diplomats. We travelled,..escaped... to many countries. We endured long separations. The words still reached me.

There were secrets of course. It suited me to let them think I was unaware.

When he returned to Chile from Capri, she did also.

But that letter, that ode to infidelity I found in his coat pocket was enough for me. That great ugly love poet. Years I gave, years.

So I gave myself to the party, I gained the affections of the people, people who gave their affection to Neruda. Our marriage was never recognised in Chile.

(Reads from book)

I will pass, we will pass,

Says the water,

And the truth sings against stone

The course of the river spreads and shifts

Wild grass grows

On the banks

I will pass, we will pass

So says night to day,

Month to year,

Time corrects the testimony

Of winners and losers

*But the tree never rests in its growing.
The tree dies, another seedling comes
To life, and everything goes on.*

I cried when he passed.
I always wondered if he had loved me.
(Places book on table and retreats)

MATHILDE:

We loved for twenty-two years. I was his country. He called me his Chascona – wild, untamed hair.

We were secret lovers for over a decade – my years of acting and singing served us well. The full moon married us in 1952 on the Isle of Capri in Italy. I wore a sparkling green and black dress, my belly swelling with our child. That babe lost to the angels before he could be born. Years later his sister left us the same way.

Yet he wrote *The Captains Verses* and *One Hundred Love Sonnets* - In 1971 they gave him a Nobel Prize in Literature. We danced.

When the dictator Pinochet disposed of President Allende our lives changed. Allende, Lorca, Neruda...(pause) all dead within days of the coup on September 11, 1973. My life as Mathilde his widow was one of exile in my own country... We made love every day in those final weeks of his life, not knowing how much we were celebrating not only life but also the anguish of his death. He loved me.

Last April, they went to the Isla Negra, they exhumed his body – forty years of rest and now this... his bones lie in laboratories across the world. His people never believed it was the cancer that took him. Too convenient...and undignified. Finally they test for toxins, finally.

He taught me the nobility of suffering. He wrote of me and in time I wrote of him... words of injustice and silence, of beauty.

His words do not leave us. They form once more, and once more again, for you my sister, for you lover, for you brother and...

*(reads book) ...And I, infinitesimal being, drunk with the great
starry void, likeness, image of mystery, felt myself a pure part of the
abyss, I wheeled with the stars, my heart broke loose on the wind.*

He loved many. He loved the very world we endured. Held nature in exultation.
Honoured the inherent beauty of the feminine from which he drank so deeply.

(Reads from book) He wrote

Si me preguntais en donde he estado

Debo decir 'sucede'.

If you should ask me where I've been all this time

I have to say "Things happen."

I have to dwell on stones darkening the earth,

on the river ruined in its own duration:

I know nothing save things the birds have lost,

the sea I left behind, or my sister crying.

Why this abundance of places? Why does day lock

with day? Why the dark night swilling round

in our mouths?

Por Que muertos?

And why the dead?

(Closes Book)

The truth lives in our bones. I lie here and wait his to be returned to me so we
may rest again.

The words linger beyond the final stanza.

And the muse, the muse whoever she is, might also write a final unfinished line
for his last day on earth.

All three women step forward

*MARYKA: Pablo is smiling. His eyes scan the seas, which constantly kisses
the placid shore.*

DELIA: The flowers in the garden sway in a gentle breeze.

MATHILDE: We are in good spirits.

I must be smiling at this morning filled with light.

AFX: Bright stage lights up then fade down - 3-4 seconds)