

The twentieth-century revolutionary and avant-garde filmmaker Luis Buñuel has always been a great inspiration for Spanish choreographer Marcos Morau. With “Sonoma”, for his company La Veronal, he continues to pay tribute to the iconic surrealist. Carmina Sanchis, Morau's dramaturge, author, adviser and friend on their collective artistic process and Buñuel's vision.

Imagine that reality is not enough, its forms weary you, its rigidity crushes you and its boundaries pen you in. And one day a light begins to grow inside you, a murmur, a language you still do not understand but that is trying all it can to be heard. Imagine that this voice is joined by other voices, other sounds, intensifying until they become shouts, screams, a resounding roar, an endless storm.

“Sonoma” always began with a shout. And although it started growing years ago, as a short piece intended for Ballet de Lorraine entitled Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution, it persisted in the imagination of director Marcos Morau, expanding in the background while other pieces were being composed, between many journeys, cities, hotel rooms and sleepless nights. Perhaps because he carried on listening to the shout and needed to give it shape. “The figure of Buñuel kept coming back to mind. I never entirely understand it. It seemed to be walking a step ahead of everything else. Perhaps it’s my way of looking for rootstock, searching for examples, groping around – even if it’s only a bit of me – for things to create.”

When Marcos mentioned “Sonoma” to me just a few months ago, Buñuel and his universe were still at work. The piece has been fermenting in his head all that time, but it was only when we sat down to describe its true character that we realised the different dimensions and readings it could end up with. “Sonoma” was going to be a hard place to reach, a site accessed through the imagination, a space where every convention would have to be stripped away and everything resignified, a battle to escape reality. It was a chance to talk about creativity and at the same time a way of being in the world, of surviving the world.

The project took off in circumstances I could never have foreseen. If “Sonoma” was about escaping reality, the reality that was unfolding in the streets was way more powerful than our role as creators. You feel a bit expendable shut up at home when a struggle with death is literally raging outside your comfortable walls. We had to chip away at creating under lockdown without being sure the piece could ever be staged. “We are in a new situation that forces us to keep creating, so we can carry on believing the world will still need us when all this is over.”

Confined but communicating via email, WhatsApp or Zoom, Marcos coordinated the team’s work while all his jottings, sketches and ideas for “Sonoma” started to materialise. Those of us who know Marcos and have worked with him before are aware that everything can change overnight but also that every detail, every movement, every word and every colour are there for a reason.

Two months before the premiere, Barcelona went into phase 1 of lifting restrictions, and that meant we could start rehearsing. “Sonoma” also entered a new phase, now we had direct contact between the performers. That is the moment when it all comes together and you can see how the parts relate to each other. The movement, the words, the music, the costumes, the lighting and the props are no longer isolated components. Now each influences the other and that is when the skill and artistry of the director stand out.

“Sonoma” began as a shout and ended as a furious storm.

“Sonoma” began as a shout and ended as a furious storm. Amid it all, in a landscape somewhere between reality and fiction, a group of women try to cast off the shackles of the familiar, to transcend boundaries by drawing on their intuition and instinct. When they come together, that inner cry they share is amplified and grows until it spills out, and they celebrate it with rituals and offerings, with hypnotic song and dance. They enter an unknown, dizzying state, a state that frees their minds but at the same time reminds them of their human condition. Sonoma is the place where the storm originates, where the drums never stop beating with a force that causes the earth to tremble and carves a deep gash in the ground beneath our feet. 🌩

Translated from Spanish by Lilian-Astrid Geese.

A SURREAL STORM

Marcos Morau's Escape from Reality

Text: Carmina Sanchis

“Sonoma”

by Celso Giménez (La Tristura) and Carmina Sanchis

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven shall be theirs.

Blessed are those who weep, for they shall find solace.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be sated.

Blessed are the shipwrecked who believed in another world worth discovering.

Blessed are the blind, for they shall never see themselves grow old.

Blessed is the fruit of your belly.

Blessed are those who disappear, for wherever you are someone will be searching for you.

Blessed are those who survive war.

Those whose speeches change the course of history.

Blessed the one who drank from the right cup.

Those who believed we could fly to the moon.

The sounds of night in a forest.

The Galaxy, the planets and all the stars in the firmament.

Blessed are those who take strength from the sky, for the Earth takes strength from them.

Blessed are those who fear their birthplace, for only there can they hurt us.

Blessed is the beginning and all that begins.

Blessed be love and hate.

The ash of the battlefields.

And those who minted a new coin.

Those who were told no, then knew they were on the right path.

Blessed are those who could live in another time without falling apart.

Those who can light a fire.

And in it will burn their house and flag.

Blessed are you who left.

And those who turned around for a moment as you were going.

And those who came back to say one last thing.

Blessed are those who shine and those who explode.

Blessed the one who burst into life.

Blessed the one who feels righteous before the end.

And blessed the end.

And the clothes in which we dress the dead.

Blessed those who came to save the world.

And the creature hit by the bullet, hunted by the dog, devoured by the vulture.

Blessed are Sarajevo, Leningrad, Aleppo, Okinawa.

Blessed the weapons if they are words.

Blessed is hope.

Blessed are those who do not look away.

The sick, the mad, the blind, for they make a virtue of necessity.

Blessed the nobles who walk in the gardens of the kingdom hoping to see them burn.

Astronauts, science and religion.

Devotion, faith, blood and the laboratory.

The gorilla, the meteorite.

Adam and Eve.

Blessed are those of us who did not make the world like this.

Blessed be their name.

Those who see God in a speck of dust and in the immensity of the universe.

Those who lay flowers on the dead on whom no one lays flowers.

Those who will one day discover a cure for cancer.

The women forgotten by history books.

Those who taught a slave's child to read.

Blessed be the empty city.

Blessed the animals who came to the empty city thinking we were extinct.

Blessed be infinite time and life that draws to an end.

Blessed are those who do not find you but keep looking for you.

Blessed the animals of the Great Flood.

And dinosaurs.

And plagues.

And the wonders of the world that we destroyed.

And the wonders of the world that we will build again.

Blessed be only daughters.

Blessed those who wait at the edge of the cliff to stop children falling off.

Blessed the fall that will carry us to death.

And the fall that will restore us to life.

Blessed be the time we have left to live.