

The Sacred Synergy of *Pieces Of Carra* - By: Carly Pandza

When Rachae Thomas approached me about the concept for her one woman show I knew I wanted in. The theme of what you resist persists is something that I instantly related to and knew audiences would as well. She told me she had no script and had never written anything before. I had devised theatre in the past as part of an ensemble but never in the role of director with only one actor. This was an exciting risk that intrigued me, I was ready to leap and pray that the net would indeed appear. By the time she came to me she had already registered for the Hollywood Fringe Festival and put down a payment to reserve a performance space. The clock had already begun ticking and would continue to do so until we were to open in mid - June. We started at the beginning of May and went from a concept, to creating the script, to incorporating blocking and musical elements simultaneously as we developed the play. It was a nonconventional progression but nonetheless a fun one.

Harmonious collaboration for this show was essential and it blurred the lines of any process that I have ever experienced as an actor, writer or director. Rotating between all of these hats I had to pop on and off quite quickly. Whether it was observing the overall vision from a director's birds-eye view, to playing in the space with Rachae as a fellow actor, to writing and revising in order to shape her work as we created the story arc; it was always a creative whirlwind. Devised theatre can also be referred to as a collaborative creation and *Pieces Of Carra* definitely embodied this. I realized at the beginning that I had to relinquish control. This might seem like a counterintuitive thing for a director to do. I learned that I could extensively prepare what we were going to work on in each session and immediately in turn throw it out once we got into the space and started to dive in. Rehearsal activities ranged from me interviewing Rachae, character discovery and exploratory exercises for movement and gestures, listening to the songs from the show, singing them and then talking about the memories that came up during the act. There was a lot of patience that needed to be practiced by both of us as we discovered the way the other one worked, as well as discovered our own techniques as neither of us had ever done anything quite like this before. Once we understood our unique artistic styles we learned how to cater to our collective needs in order to elevate the work and move forward.

The journey of this production has been magical. It has characterized the essence of what I think it truly means to be an artist. Splashing around and swimming in uncharted waters rather than being focused only on the result of what it will look like once you get to shore. While the end destination has always been kept in mind, exploration is where this piece was born. The process of this play has been pure *play* and has reminded me what it means to *play* while creating art and why plays are in fact called *plays*. It has been a joyful game of trial and error, of sharing and peeling back the layers of Rachae's life until we unearthed the gems. It has been an honor. Most directors only dream of being granted this type of opportunity. The shared space to create freely has been a continuous rejuvenation and contribution to the evolution of my creative spirit.