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*A CurtainUp Review*  
*Another Part of the House*

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*a new play by Migdalia Cruz Inspired by Federico Garcia Lorca's La Casa de Bernarda Alba by Elyse Sommer*



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The Classic Stage Company, besides mounting consistently interesting plays, always publishes tremendously informative program notes and a newsletter filled with background information on current and upcoming productions. The CSC's printed materials pertaining to *Another Part of the House* are no exception. I read them with special care since I had difficulty accepting the premise of Migdaglia Cruz's play and wanted to get a better handle on how she defined what audiences are seeing on the CSC in relation to its inspirational source. Is it a new play? Is it an adaptation? Is it a rewrite?

[FEATURES](#)

**NEWS**

[Etcetera and Short Term Listings](#)

**LISTINGS**

[Broadway](#)  
[Off-Broadway](#)

[BOOKS and CDs](#)

**OTHER PLACES**

[Berkshires](#)  
[London](#)  
[LA/San Diego](#)  
[Philadelphia](#)  
[Masthead](#)

According to a special insert headlined "Program Notes" Ms. Cruz is quoted as follows: "When asked to write a play based on a classic, I was drawn to the work of the Spanish master Federico Garcia Lorca." This request, according to the CSC Playbill, came from the Classic Stage Company which tags *Another Part of the House* as "a new play by Midaglia Cruz. . .inspired by Federico Garcia Lorca's *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*."

The play's dramaturg, Morgan Jenness, on the other hand, uses the word **adaptation** in her CSC newsletter essay justifying the company's intent. Ms. Jenness' concludes that this proces of "re-imagining" -- (meaning rewriting?)-- by stating that everyone involved with the production is posing a "challenge to our very assumptions about adaptation, and suggest new possibilities for the revitalization of the classics." Excuse me. How does the word adaptation square with the previously mentioned billing of "a new play" and "inspired by?"

Finally, there's Ms Cruz's own little Program Notes essay which also uses the word "adapt" and rationalizes this piggybacking process as "less sacred to adapt" because it applies to Lorca's "most plot-driven play." Her conflicted feelings about the new-adapted-rewritten play are evident in her concluding "'Frederico--Forgive me. Allow me. . .'"?

Readers, forgive **me** if I seem to be avoiding getting to the matter at hand--a review of the play itself. However, I think this "challenge to the process of translation" is indeed more interesting than the play. I'm sorry I didn't see it on a Saturday matinee when a discussion with scholars follows the performance, or a Tuesday night when there's a discussions with the artists. Perhaps they could have convinced me that this merging of another writer's play into your own isn't a misguided idea. While it's possible that had Lorca lived he might have rewritten *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* at sthe job for him. Especially since *Another Part of the House* subverts Lorca's intention, (as stated in his introductory note), to create "a photographic documentary." Thus his *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* is a masterpiece of understatement, which in *Another Part of the House* becomes a realistic fantasy, with all the subtleties formerly left to the reader's imagination now "re-imagined" for them by the author.

The plot, as in the original, traces the gradual destruction of Bernarda Alba' s family after the death of her husband. Angustias, the unattractive eldest daughter and heir to her father' s wealth attracts a proposal of marriage leading to an explosion of jealousy from her sisters, made more explosive by the clandestine affair of Adela, the youngest, with Angustias' fiance. Bernarda, to preserve the family's honor pretends to have him killed in order to shock Adela, but her ploy misfires with Adela's suicide.

The shift from a Spanish village to Cuba is less troubling than the addition of a visible, if ghostly, Pepe El Romano (Seth Kantor), the expanded role of the grandmother as a lovable and sexually free fairy-grandmother-ghost, a touch of incest and bits and pieces from other Lorca work. The director (David Esbjornon) seems not to trust his actors to convey the darkness that permeates this unhappy household. Instead everyone is bathed in such a dim light that you can barely discern any feelings expressed. Irma St. Paule does the best she can as Maria Josefa. The other women in the cast are Doris Difarnecio, Sara Erde, Kadina Halliday, Mercedes

Herrero, Paula Pizzi, Adriana Sevan and Patricia Triana.

My opinion is that Ms. Cruz and Mr. Esbjornson should have left Lorca's closed doors shut and directed their talents elsewhere. This said, the above mentioned performances--plus-discussion should make for an interesting examination of this issue of how far an adaptation can or should go. A special **free** evening (7 p.m., 3/24, at CSC) billed as "Re-imagining" *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*, The Politics of Adaptation may convince readers that it's this review and not the play that's wrong-headed. Comments from anyone who attends would be most welcome.

*Another Part of the House* will run at the CSC until April 6th. The company, as usual, offers a range of money-saving ticket prices: Quick Tix available half an hour prior to curtain, \$10 student and senior rush tickets an hour before all performances; adults accompanied by students \$10 with students in high school or younger able to purchase tickets on a pay what you can basis.

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