

Director's Note

It has taken twelve years to get this show to actually happen. That's right: *twelve. years.*

They say that seven is the most magical, or holiest of numbers – but given the length of time it's taken this show to reach the stage, I'm half inclined to wager there's a case to be made for twelve. After all, there are twelve Greek Olympians; twelve zodiac constellations; twelve days of Christmas; and we just so happen to find ourselves in the twelfth (and final) month of the year; the month most associated with winter celebrations, with both Christmas and the solstice rooted in the concept of the *feminine divine* – but more on that in just a second.

For now: welcome to what I'm *certain* is an evening to remember. What began in the summer of 2009 as a seven-person project to present the up-and-coming generation of Divas here in Syracuse, has proliferated beyond my wildest imagination into a true *extravaganza*. But despite the innumerable changes made throughout the decade it's taken us to get here, the mission of the show has never wavered:

These women are *ferocious*. Every one of them brings something inherently different to the table, so much so that there is no use in even attempting to compare them. Honestly, it's not really possible! They are each exquisitely singular, and I am thrilled that they will be sharing their talents with you this evening.

The show is divided into three parts: *perception*; *trauma*; and *survival*. And given the title of the production itself, I thought it serendipitous that the world's first woman is most commonly known as *Eve*. Thus, what better place to start than where it all began – all the way back in Eden. From there, we explore various vantage points of how women have been perceived since Eve and continue to be perceived today.

In act two, we explore our briefest portion of the show: centering on trauma. Unfortunately, sexual assault and physical abuse are at the center of that segment, so **if you may be emotionally triggered, we suggest you leave during "O Viridissima Virga", before "In the Green" begins, and return after "The Dark I Know Well" has finished.**

Finally, we land at survival – but I won't spoil anything further. You'll have to wait and see how we deliver on that promise; the promise every woman must make to herself, to persist and proceed no matter *how* much the world seems determined to break her.

As for my earlier mention of the *feminine divine*, I will leave you with this: as we all well know the origin story of Christmas, I thought it more prudent to look elsewhere for inspiration, especially as our show opens upon the sacred winter solstice.

At this time of year, the ancient Greeks exalted the goddess Persephone – Queen of the Underworld – whose absence from Olympus brought winter's biting chill, killing every vegetation not yet yielded for the harvest. Upon returning to Olympus in the summer, however, she was changed, "filled with wisdom and knowledge of existence outside of her Mother's realm. She had learned the power of transformation; from death to rebirth, from dark to light, lost to found, chaos to clarity, fear to transcendence." (*Judith Shaw*)

Similarly, the ancient Celts worshipped The Cailleach, a goddess who was said to be "the embodiment of winter, clothing the land with the whiteness of snow, ending the time of growth with the time of death and darkness. As 'The Veiled One', in the quiet, dark of winter, she rules the hidden worlds, reigning over our dreams and inner realities." (*Judith Shaw*)

So, you see, Mother Mary isn't the only queen venerated at the end of December. It appears, in the collective consciousness of Western civilization, that this time of year has been long *reserved* for the power of female transcendence, and so too shall our show uphold that most ancient of traditions.

Yours,

J.R. Westfall