

# Existentialism meets deep intimacy in *My Time*

The writer A.R. Garcia wrote “My Time” based off a single conversation with his mother that never left him. He asked if she regretted decades of marriage to his father. Her answer was basically no, yet that no came with some qualifications. She didn’t regret the roles of wife or mother, her time with her kids or her many memories. She didn’t regret anything but she did have the sad sensation of not getting that time back. It had become a discreet chunk of reality – my time – and it was passing on without her.

The play he wrote and now directs is based around that phenomenon and sensation that anyone who’s lived long enough will invariably face. “My Time” continues themes of self-worth and gendered miscommunication Garcia developed in “She Hates Coffee” and his 2013 one-man show, “I Love Them All,” which was adapted to the film “Saint Nicholas.” For as long as he can remember, he’s been captured by the burden of silence around female pain, something he credits his father with inspiring.

“At a young age, he told me you’ll never be able to understand women,” Garcia said. “As I grew up, I saw men not understanding the emotions involved, so they turned away. But I came to a point where I thought I don’t understand you, but I can know how you feel and connect that to something similar.”

The idea for “My Time” has been percolating in his head for years, Garcia said, but he was always looking for the right leading lady. Garcia met Francesca Van Horne, a playwright in her own right with the one-woman show

“Tales from the Trundle,” on the set of “Saint Nicholas.” In temperament and artistic vision, the two bonded instantly. That Van Horne had previous experience carrying the hundreds of lines for a one-person show encouraged Garcia to write the role around Van Horne.

Although they met on a film set, the two have a real fondness for the theater. For Garcia, it’s the most powerful medium to convey emotional truth.

“That’s the thing about live theater. The rawness of it will expose all of the truths and all of the hidden meanings and the folds of the story that you won’t get in film or TV.”

That rawness, especially from a female’s perspective, is what drew Van Horne to “My Time.”

“A.R. has the ability to write from the female perspective,” Van Horne said. “In this nonlinear fashion with many layers. But what really struck me was how he wrote from a female’s perspective. That’s the sign of a great writer.” Within this material, Van Horne says she’s really challenged. “My Time” revolves around Ana, a recently divorced woman in her late 40s. The play is loosely based around the seven stages of grief and explores how often they overlap in a dynamic stratum. As the duo ramp up for the late-April run, Van Horne is layering on her own experience to add to her relationship with Ana.

“I thought it would be helpful to approach it as a Latina immigrant,” Van Horne said.

“Speaking for myself, I’ve rarely been in a relationship where it’s not hard to admit I played a role in its destruction.”

Ana’s reckonings with her own role in the dissolution of her marriage are where her character finally cracks open. But to make that seem authentic, Van Horne has rehearsed lines with a voice recorder, writing them on notecards so the emotion leads her to the next line, not rote memorization. It’s been a challenging but



rewarding journey of discovery.

“I’ve been living with Ana for a couple of days. She kind of changes every day.”

Van Horne says Ana is far more than a symbol of MeToo or a token PoC. She’s a function of her culture, how it is both repressive and praiseful of women, though too often the former.

“This is about the background of what she lived. She’s proud and religious. She’s had a hard life, but she refuses to see that. She never thought of having time to herself.”

Garcia’s hopes remain high for “My Time.” The last time a production of his was at the Teatro LATEA was in 2013 when his entry was a winner at The ONE Festival.

“With my mom,” Garcia said, “with people like her, they were always told to get over it. They had to stand tall and be strong, and not everyone realized you still have to take care of them. I view this play as a way to honor my mother. To say: look at the suffering and how she remained empowered.”

“My Time” runs April 22 to 28 at Teatro LATEA as part of The ONE Festival. Check out <https://mytime.eventcombo.com/> for exact dates and times.