

# Woman as a Human Being

Honors Thesis in Directing: *Fefu & Her Friends* by Maria Irene Fornes

Directed by Colette Victoria Hamilton

## CAST LIST

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**FEFU**

**CHRISTINA**

**CINDY**

**EMMA**

**JULIA**

**PAULA**

**CECILIA**

**SUE**

## Introduction

For my Senior Honors Thesis, I directed a production of *Fefu & Her Friends* by Maria Irene Fornes. The play consists of a cast of eight unique female characters that explore important topics about women and their bodies and is a story I felt needed to be told because of the lack of theatre for women, about women. It was written in 1976 and meant to take place in 1935, but the themes exhibited are still relevant to a modern audience, which is why in my adaptation, I created a modernized and simplistic production that would demonstrate to the audience that the ideas about women in the play are not far from those today. In the play, 7 women come to Fefu's house to rehearse for a presentation they're giving on arts education. The primary conflict occurs between Fefu and Julia, who used to be great friends, but since Julia was in a hunting accident and hit her head, the two have become estranged. She's lost her ability to walk and experiences hallucinations, and has become a completely different person than before. The play exhibits domestic patterns with depictions of psychological and physical suffering. As Diane Lynn Moroff claims in *Fornes: Theatre in the Present Tense*; "To listen to these characters is often to hear insecurity, fear, and tentativeness, while to look at them is often to see a community of women variously empowering one another," (Moroff 33). My goal in putting on this production was to explore themes of female dismemberment; as in the reduction, reorganization and interruption of women, as a result of male violence. I achieved this by bringing these themes to a modern audience through modernization and neutrality in design, submerging the audience in the structure of the play, and creating an intimacy between the them and actors, so that they could experience the world of the play as the characters simultaneously entered theirs. I centralized women's recognition of themselves, their power, and of each other through an intimate and

partially immersive theatre experience where the audience would become part of the coming together, dismemberment, and reintegration the structure manifests. The world building of the play was accomplished through the creation of surrealism Fornes calls for, and making the effects of it reverberate.

My research process consisted of reading several books on directing, on Fornes and the play itself in order to more fully understand it and to consider other people's ideas about it. I also conducted interviews with Katie Pearl, who directed the UCSD MFA production of Fornes' *What of the Night* in the Fall of 2017, and whose fiancé is working on a documentary on Fornes, as well as UCSD MFA students Kyle Hester and Mo Rodvanich to get the perspective of people who've worked with Fornes plays. When interviewing Katie Pearl, we discussed how Fornes takes on a long list of themes in her plays, and as a director it is important to choose a few to focus on because if you try and capture them all, most will get lost in the composition. To choose the themes that I wanted to prioritize and manifest throughout the play taught me an important lesson about crafting my vision as a director. The biggest challenge working on *Fefu* was the specificity in my analysis. There is so much going on within it, and every word and action needed my understanding and interpretation I then had to relay to my actors. I was constantly learning more about it, and it was frustrating but also liberating to learn that the process of discovering a play is continuous, but I had to do my best from day one. I was nervous that the themes and ideas within the play would have difficulty reaching the audience. This anxiety prepared me to push the actors towards continuing to manifest everything we were discussing, and I found that in the end the production was successful in achieving these goals.

### **In Rehearsal**

We began the rehearsal process with two weeks of table work. I felt that it was a priority for this play because of how much is going on in the dialogue and the extensive amount of themes working at once. It was important to work through it as a cast so that I could communicate my vision of the play as well as talk through their own. After our first rehearsal, I sent them off with specific things to research and to begin thinking about.

During early rehearsals once we were on our feet, I would often have them do exercises from Laban movement training. I focused on Laban action drives and used them in order to push them into the extremes of their physicality and to put emphasis on their bodies in the production. We would do an exercise where I would have them layer in the different efforts of time, weight, space and flow. They were encouraged to explore the extremes of each effort where they felt their character lived and the opposites of them. The world of the play allows and encourages the women to be free from the constraints of society and this exercise was meant to examine what that felt like. They are in what is considered a safe space, where there are no limitations on female relationships or the female body. When we had full cast rehearsals, I often ran exercises using viewpoints to create strength within the ensemble. I used various exercises for warm ups, and primarily used grid exercises and stressed soft focus to really get them watching each other.

Once we started getting comfortable with blocking, we spent time exploring the text. In rehearsal we would do exercises to help them feel the rhythm of it in their bodies whilst watching each other and sending action. To continue putting emphasis on the text, I encouraged them to examine the structure and rhetorical devices that were being used, and in rehearsals I pushed the use of operatives to assist the storytelling. Fornes uses such specific language for her

world building, which may be due to the fact that English was her second language, and so it was important to know the weight of every word.

After speaking with Mo Rodvanich and Katie Pearl, I learned something new about objective. Rodvanich told me about an article she had read after *What of the Night* that discussed how Maria Irene Fornes often didn't believe characters/actors always needed to have an objective, "sometimes people just be." When asking Pearl about this, she said Fornes would advocate for the flipside of objective, that is, investment in the moment, having big experiences, and simply being happy. I shared this with my actors, and it led me to often not push objective but instead, focus on the journey between destinations, and keep the inner emotional life and inner monologue continuous. Once they knew their characters and scenes well, I asked them to trust themselves because if they did, they would automatically respond truthfully to the moment to moment, and not have the need to be objective driven.

## **PART I**

Part I of *Fefu* serves as a coming together of all the characters. We begin with Fefu, Cindy and newcomer Christina, who acts as a plug in for the audience. We are introduced to this world and learn the rules of it, and eventually everyone arrives to the house.

To have the audience come together as the characters do, they all begin in the main theatre. The Arthur Wagner Theatre was the perfect setting for the play. The essence of the black box theatre in its most plain state is dark and intimate. In the world of *Fefu & Her Friends*, men possess the outside. Fefu's husband, her brother and the gardener all remain outdoors while the women "sit [there] in the dark" (13). The house is representative of the female body and the interior is gendered as female for its depth, penetrability and comfort. To create a space that

followed the rules of the world was important in giving the characters a comfortable space to live in. The shape of the theatre being a three quarter thrust made it ideal for creating an intimacy with the audience as well as furthering my vision of each audience group having a different experience with the show. The structure of the space made it so the actors would interact the audience members as they become immersed due to the close proximity. The four entrances into the space allowed the actors to enter from all around and through the audience. The set I designed to follow my minimalist vision as well as the cyclical structure of the play itself. I used three benches, one upstage center, and one of each side. Downstage I placed the bar on a rolling cart, which created a circle with the benches. This gave the actors space to move and fill in, and I chose the benches as a tool to serve each side of audience, since you can sit facing a variety of ways on a bench. The space also lent itself to the theatricality of the play, in collaboration with the lights, sound and movement. “Fornes insists that the female subject can exist in the theater and, if there, then also elsewhere.” (Moroff 35). These elements were important in establishing the surrealism that I was trying to accomplish.

This idea of the men possessing the outside while the women maintain the inside is seen through the image of the stone. Fefu asks Christina if she’s ever “turned a stone over in damp soil?” (04), she continues with:

You see, that which is exposed to the exterior ... is smooth and dry and clean. That which is not... underneath, is slimy and filled with fungus and crawling with worms. It is another life that is parallel to the one we manifest. It’s there. The way worms are underneath the stone. If you don’t recognize it ... it eats you. (05)

The underside of the stone is where all the revolting parts of life exist; women and their bodies, and the top of the stone that gets to see the sun and express itself outwardly to the world is for the men. The fascination with the grotesque demonstrates the desire to explore that which is women's power and the way society treats the female body, and it was important to embody this in the space. To further the focus on this in Part I, the actors were encouraged to live in unique and interesting physical shapes to support the specificity needed to create surrealism in these moments. For Julia and Fefu, I wanted to show their connection even though there is so much contrast between them. I would have them move into the same shape without acknowledgement of the other person in the moments where almost everyone or everyone was on stage, so that the audience's eye may be drawn to look at the similarity in their shapes amongst a much larger and specified image.

In Part I, Fefu claims "I still like men better than women" (13) and argues that men are the ones with the freedom and strength while women have to find these things in men. She criticizes women for being "restless with each other. They are like live wires... either chattering to keep themselves from making contact, or else, if they don't chatter, they avert their eyes... like Orpheus... as if a god once said "and if they shall recognize each other the world will be blown apart" (13). The key to understanding *Fefu & Her Friends* is emphasized in this analogy. The power of the human gaze is examined, and the need for women to recognize each other is the solution to fighting the forces of male violence. Fefu must save the other women by bringing them to a higher realization of themselves, their power as women and of female relationships. She attempts to instigate integration, which is why she hosts the event in the first place. While putting focus on this idea, I had the actor playing Fefu use tactics that challenged the other

women to think while using specific actions when speaking with each of them individually.

“Although Fefu implies that she likes men better than women, the emotional distance between her and her husband is immeasurable, and by the play’s end she has sincerely thanked almost every woman in her home for what each has enabled her” (Moroff 33).

In the world of the play, all the male figures the women discuss or describe are violent, mentally and physically, and attempt to sever these women in the previous and present action. This is seen specifically in Cindy’s dream world, Julia’s hallucinations, and Fefu’s husband. The opening symbol of the gun presents an activity that illustrates the relationship between Fefu and her husband. “It’s a game we play. I shoot and he falls” (06), Fefu explains to Cindy and Christina after shooting a blank at him from inside the house. She later admits that she’s never sure if the gun will actually be loaded or not. “He told me one day he’ll put real bullets in the guns. He likes to make me nervous,” (10). She justifies this activity by claiming “If I didn’t shoot him with blanks, I might shoot him for real” (10). This demonstrates a problem within the most directly seen male relationship in the play, which I accomplished by placing the gun on stage from the top of the show. It lived on the ledge on house left, and was closer to being a member of the audience than a performer in the play. Those audience members who might have noticed it would then be sitting in anticipation of it going off, as “Chekhov’s gun” governs, giving them a different experience of the opening beats. The ultimate goal was for it to take up space in the household. It is the one constant that never leaves the space until the very end. Since the structure of the play, is not linear or progressive, the gun is the only marker of time when it goes off in the beginning and the end, creating a frame around the play. I highlighted it and used it in this way in order to exhibit the role of male violence in the play.



## **PART II**

Part Two is written to be immersive. The women are divided into four scenes and the audience is split into four groups and rotated between them to give a physical demonstration of dismemberment. The structure of the space made it ideal for moving audience members around the building, in a sort of maze like fashion. The audience becomes apart of the cyclical dramatic model as they move through the spaces. They are no longer separate from the characters and must become apart of the recognition of their own bodies as the characters do.

The scenes in the play are not written to be in any particular order, so as each group of audience moves through Part II, they each witness a different beginning and end. In order to further these unique experiences, I blocked the scenes so that the fourth run of each had a different ending then the others.

### **In the Kitchen**

When we first began working with this scene, I ran exercises with the actors to help them really listen to one another and to find their specific emotional journey through the scene. Speaking with Katie Pearl had a huge impact on the staging. She described to me the importance of allowing the language live on its own, and in surrealism how important it is to focus on the specificity in movement. Pearl suggested using stillness as a tool could be helpful to surrealism. The scene called for a focus on language and the relationship between these women's bodies which is why once Cecilia entered, I had the actors remain standing still with a large distance between them which brought power to their stance. The two lesbian women do not share the same anxieties about men, which I built on with their specificity in movement in contrast with the other women whose bodies are more affected. By putting attention on the language, the

dialogue about making tea for instance became about the actions behind those lines instead of the activity of making the tea (41-2). The need to reach out physically or to use their body to gain power shifted into the language and propelled their actions further because there was more intention behind it. The shape to me highlighted the distance that has occurred in the relationship, and raised the stakes by creating a power dynamic and a space that needed to be filled with the words.

### **On the Lawn**

When you exit the theatre and follow the hall to the outdoors there are benches where “On the Lawn” took place. This scene is unique in that it is the “only scene that abandons the house for sunlight and air Fefu associates with men,” (Fuchs 93) as Elinor Fuchs states in ‘Fefu and Her Friends: The View from the Stone’. Emma and Fefu overtly discuss sex, with Emma asking Fefu at the top of the scene “Do you think about genitals all the time?” (25), holding a basket full of genital-shaped vegetables and explaining her thoughts on the relationship between sexuality and the heavens. She argues that sex is a private act and therefore can only be judged by the heavens, and she claims that “heaven is populated with divine lovers” meaning those who can enjoy their sexuality and devote themselves to the act. Their relationship in this scene is an undisturbed image of the female relationship, one that is free from societal constraints and the judgement of men. Because of this I staged the scene to be playful where they would throw the vegetables at one another, wrestle and kiss. I worked with the actors on exercises that forced them to play and free their bodies so that we could accomplish this on stage.

Once Fefu leaves the scene, Emma constructs an effigy of her whilst “reciting Shakespeare’s fourteenth sonnet, dedicated to the gaze of the sonneteer’s lover. It is the second

important moments in the play in which Fornes draws attention to the revelatory force of the human gaze,” (Fuchs 93). Emma dressed a melon in Fefu’s hat and scarf on top of her basket with some hair made of lettuce. She looked at the effigy as if to look Fefu in the eye, to highlight the power of the gaze, and in the final moments, tears it apart and looks to it with a sense of loss. At the end of the fourth run, I had the actor use all of her force and smash the melon representing Fefu’s head to show Emma’s idea of Fefu being destroyed.

### **In the Study**

In this scene between Cindy and Christina, the two sit in the main space, reading and talking with one another. Cindy asks Christina if she likes Fefu, and in response she tangles a web of uncertainty as she tries to express to Cindy her fear of Fefu’s ability to disturb surfaces, and of Fefu hurting others and herself. Christina misunderstands Fefu in that she assumes Fefu thinks that women will use knowledge of one another as power and will hurt each other. She can’t comprehend that when Fefu claims she likes “being like a man” (13), she is trying to express her desire for women to have the same status as men. Christina argues that efforts to disrupt the status quo are admirable but unpredictable and sometimes dangerous.

Cindy responds to Christina by articulating a “terrible dream” she had. When Cindy spoke, she moved around the room, painting the picture of her dream, creating a contrast in the physicality of these women as Christina sits on the bench unmoved. In describing the dream, Cindy exploits her anxieties about male power through the male figures in her dream. Each hold a position of high status and are supposedly safe-- a doctor, policemen, and a professor-- but they each exhibit aggressive traits and act violently towards her and others. Through this Cindy illustrates positions of power being destructive, and is sympathetic to Christina’s association of

Fefu with corrupt male power. The men in her dream also force this idea on her of being “cured”, helped, and corrected, and Cindy responds to their aggression with; “I said to him, “Stop and listen to me.” I said it so strongly that he stopped. [...] Then, I said to him, “Restrain yourself.” I wanted to say respect me.” (33). I placed her standing on the center bench for this line to show the significance of this described interaction. There is so much resonance in the line in that Cindy’s body is being manipulated and thrown around by men and she stops them in hopes of asking for respect. When she says this, she is standing in support of Fefu’s ideals, and tries to articulate the difficulty of taking one’s power and her desire to do so. Cindy’s anxieties I expressed through her childlike movements which manifested in her indirect spatial relationships, the lightness in her weight and free flow. We created her shapes to be very specific in that she used a lot of levels, they were either very relaxed or very tense, and the way she moved from one to the other had a specific path.

Christina responds to the dream by saying; “I think it means you should go to a different doctor” (33). When she does this, she once again misunderstands what is trying to be relayed to her, and in this instance, the two of the women fail to recognize each other. I accomplished this through their lack of directness with each other, and by focusing on the parallels and antitheses in their language. In the fourth run of the scene, I had Cindy storm out of the space out of the frustration of being misunderstood, and Christina acted confused in response to this action.

### **In the Bedroom**

In “In the Bedroom”, Julia retires to a messy, thrown-together room with leaves scattered about to lie down, and experiences one of her hallucinations. The scene took place in the women’s dressing room, with the audience crammed into this intimate space with her. The

audience crowded around Julia who was lying down as she described her “last moments of independence” (Fuchs 95). This scene was imperative in interrupting the audience's experience with the world of the play by reminding them of their own. Julia's world that she has created in her mind is representative of our reality which she enters as she experiences her hallucination. The way women are treated in this world is as if they are “evil,” and that “everything on earth is for man” (35). This demonstrates a common ideology in our society. In her head, the “judges” who are all once again violent male figures, force her to speak this “prayer”. They have tried to inscribe in her a belief that women should remain quiet with their body parts put away, that skin is not aesthetic, and that their bodies are to serve men and their sexuality. This criticism and control of the female body mirrors the way we treat women's bodies today. These characters along with women in our society are at battle with the image men have created for them as they are constantly trying to recreate it. Fefu pushes female recognition, but the flip side of that is seen in this room with Julia. The strength of the scene was imperative to relaying this message about the way women's bodies are treated and what we must fight against as a community, which I accomplished by making the audience apart of the scene. I had the actor make eye contact with as many audience members as she could, spending time with them, and using them as her sources who were asking her questions and listening to her. As she enters into our world, she must break the fourth wall and engage with her audience. I casted Andrea van den Boogaard as Julia, whose distinct feature is her large, soft eyes, that strongly communicate her feelings and thoughts in a tender way. To look her in the eyes as she speaks to you is incredibly striking. The choice to place her in the dressing room was not only to bring the audience into an intimate space, but to bring them into a space with mirrors that would normally be for undressing so that

their attention would be shifted onto their own bodies. The effect of surrealism is furthered in this space, which I crafted by pushing her to first see the subject of her hallucination, process it to determine which world it was apart of, and then to engage with it. As Fuchs describes, “Putting Julia’s hallucination in the form of a soliloquy without an authorized observer or receiver is Fornes’s chief means of creating its surreal effect” (Fuchs 95). To help the actor project the images she crafted in her mind and send action outward at it, I worked on wall sitting exercises with her. This also put the tension into her legs, the part of Julia’s body that is failing her, so she could feel what it was like for frustration to live in them. For the final run, I had Julia pull herself out of bed and into her wheelchair. The act of seeing her struggle into the chair was meant to stand in contrast with her positive, “I can manage” attitude that she puts on for the other characters. The emotional trauma Julia is living in is so high, I wanted the last group to experience a physical embodiment of her internal struggle.

### **PART III**

In Part III, the women, along with the audience, are reintegrated into the main space and the women enjoy conversation, performance and play together. We get to see the women begin to recognize themselves and one another. This begins with Cecilia’s monologue on community in which she discusses the importance of being surrounded by peers. “We cannot survive in a vacuum” (44) she explains, describing how we are unable to grow if everyone in the world agrees with us, so we must surround ourselves with those that can challenge us. As she talks about this, the other women listen and try to connect with it, even though she is the newest member to this space. The importance of community supports the themes of female recognition and the ways in which they can fight dismemberment. Cecilia encourages them towards

integration here as much as Fefu does. Julia chimes in, describing her experiences with hallucinations and her desire to be hospitalized so that she could be around people like her-- she is craving the ability to exist in a community. The other women become uncomfortable and silent as she attempts to reach out and make everything okay. This was cultivated through the actors inability to look at Julia in these moments. At this point, even though the women are beginning to come together, they are failing to recognize Julia.

The women then move into the presentation of what they're going to be performing at the event. They speed through it quite quickly, as the audience gets to experience these women supporting one other as they each stand up to do their part while the others clap and cheer. The content of the presentation is not run or discussed explicitly, reminding us that the reason they're together is insignificant compared to the interactions and relationships that are being created in this space. This part of the play I made theatrical and playful. "The play suggests the means by which these self-narrated women might work together to reconstitute their own subjectivity, to gain self-knowledge and self-awareness to enable genuine self control or, finally, self-dramatization," (Moroff 36).

The one performance we do see is Emma's performance on feminism from the *The Science of Educational Dramatics* by Emma Sheridan Fry. During Part III, two of the benches and the bar were taken away, and for the "performances" the actors added a front row to the theatre and became part of the audience. I staged the performance so that Emma would go into the audience and interact with them to integrate the audience into this performance to make them feel apart of the community being created. I casted Micaela Martinez as Emma for her energy

and theatricality. She also is fluent in American Sign Language, which we found a way to incorporate into the performance to add another language level to the production.

Throughout the play, the women start to acknowledge the power they have. I specifically manifested this idea in Paula as she embodies what Fefu is trying to instill in them all. Towards the end of Part III, she explodes and explains her thoughts on privilege and experience living in poverty. This moment is a shift in Paula's journey with power. In Part I, she begins as calculating and apologetic and allows Cecilia to have the power in Part II. She then starts to gain power from the women supporting her as she timidly proposes her part of the presentation. Emma tells her to breathe and bow and the women clap for her, and she inhales their energy. She then perkily tries out jokes on the other women and explores the theatricality Emma embodies. In her next encounter with Cecilia, the text is paralleled but flipped from Part II, as Paula gains some power back from Cecilia. By the time her monologue has come, she has started to feel what it is like to disturb surfaces and is able to give herself the space to tell the other women what she's been thinking and what she feels is important. When working with the actor playing Paula, I asked her to track this specific journey so that the audience could experience the way recognizing one's power as a woman could change oneself. In doing Laban exercises, the actor found that Paula lived in the drives of sustainment, indirectness, strong weight and bound flow, and the opposites felt out of character at first, which made her growth into her final moments more engaging as she moved into opposing drives.

At the end of the play, the women retreat to the kitchen and Fefu re-enters the space. She experiences her own hallucination in which Julia is walking. It acts as the visualization of Fefu's last hope of saving Julia. If Julia can regain her ability to walk, in Fefu's mind she can still save



Julia. I crafted this hallucination by having Julia enter through the center door that leads outside of the theatre, which Emma opens during her performance. Her walk was sustained and calculated, and her eyes became empty and indirect as Fefu stepped in unison with her, once again adding to the surrealism through physical shape. Until the final scene, Fefu avoids Julia's gaze at all cost in order to highlight their failure to recognize each other. To raise the stakes and to heighten this concept, the actor playing Fefu was not allowed to make eye contact with Julia until this scene. As Fefu tries to save everyone in the play from a fate like Julia's, she forgets to recognize her, and the two opposing forces in the play "blow the world apart" when they finally come together under the human gaze. Fefu stands on the side of female recognition and Julia of male violence because she is a victim to it. Fefu fears the same fate as Julia hopes to protect Fefu from herself. Their story parallels that of Orpheus, who is mentioned in Fefu's opening monologue. In the myth, Orpheus goes down into the underworld to save his lost love and convinces the gods to let him bring her back. They oblige but only if he agrees to not look back at her until they both surface. When he reaches the top, he looks back, ignoring the fact that she too needed to come up from the underworld and so she disappears forever. Like Orpheus, Fefu descends down into the "underworld" to save Julia, but fails to bring her to the surface, aka to make her walk. Both loved each other, but are devoted to different worlds. In blocking the scene, Julia felt a greater need to reach out to Fefu, and Fefu attempts to give her the support she thinks Julia needs to get out of the chair. I created specific shapes and levels within their spatial relationship, and when they finally come together and place their foreheads together in recognition, it is a moment of pure love between these two women, and the final unification. When Julia begins to pray, and Fefu's attempt to pull her out of the chair is interrupted, and her

anxiety leads her to go outside and kill a rabbit. “Fefu must seize the gun and go out-of-doors to the men in order to find a safe “smooth” place after Julia’s incantation promised an approaching descent into hell of female dismemberment,” (Fuchs 104).

Julia’s death in the end becomes a group effort, due to everyone failing to reach full recognition of one another, especially Julia, even though we began to see glimmers of it. The careless handling of the gun also leads to her fate. When Julia dies, everyone re-enters the space and forms a circle around her, once again mimicking the cyclical structure and connecting them together around her. Fefu enters with the dead rabbit from the center door where Julia came walking in from. The women slowly sprinkled leaves onto the ground in order to connect them in mourning as well as collaboration of Julia’s death, and to bring the audience back into the bedroom where there were leaves scattered about.

### **Conclusion**

Seeing all of these elements come together was incredibly exciting and also terrifying considering my biggest anxiety was that the interpretation of the play wouldn’t be communicated, and that the surrealism wouldn’t resonate. The performances resulted in a lot of positive responses to the play. One audience member, Rita Shultz, commented; “What an amazing performance by an ensemble of very talented young women!” and Stashia Robbins complimented “Incredible job everyone. It was an honor to watch.” A few male audience members expressed fear when being in the dressing room with Julia. They described that when she would look them in the eyes, they felt her intensity, which told me I was successful in casting and creating the intimacy of that scene. This fear hopefully came from self-awareness and recognition of the male violence that exists in their community. Audience members seemed to

really enjoy the play, but what I was curious about is if it made people introspective. A friend of mine, Salina Bedford, told me after the show how thoughtful it had made her, and later how much it stuck with her. I received a message from Jalani Blankenship saying; “Fefu was absolutely beautiful. I was just telling Sophia [Fefu] earlier today that I've been thinking about it every day since I saw it. I loved it so much and it was so exceptionally thought provoking, funny, and terrifying. You and your cast did an amazing job and I would love to see it again. It was fantastic.” Comments like these made me feel like I had been successful. I had accomplished my vision of the play to the best of my ability, but it was the audience response that was meant the most to me in terms of the value of the play. As a director, I want to make theatre that draws people in and makes them think critically about the world, and when working on plays with themes so close to home, I wanted them to feel with the characters and have a unique experience that makes it more personal. When speaking with my friend Marty Benson, his comments assured me I had accomplished these things. He said it was “Engaging. I thought you did a great job with it. It’s a whirlwind of compassionate monologues, couched in an actualized fantasy world. It’s eight distinct and strong female characters talking about what matters.” In directing this production, I learned a lot of new things about how to navigate through specific texts. I learned how to work with surrealism, and how to give space for change and negotiation. I also learned a lot about myself as a director, and the kind of style I like to work with. My heart is so full of love for Fefu and her friends, and I want to be able to continue to tell their stories and to work towards doing theatre that changes the way we view women and act as women.

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