

Orlando
By Sarah Ruhl
Directed by Ran Xia

“I am about to understand...” is the last thing Orlando says before the curtains fall, in a moment that’s never meant to be an ending, but an invitation: to carry on evolving, expanding—

Understanding.

“About to” understand:

To accept that I do not, in fact, understand something -- not just yet, not fully anyway, (perhaps I never will). And, to hold steadfast a willingness to continue my pursuit of understanding. I’ve adopted it as a general philosophy in life, a sort of mantra when approaching an impossible feat (like running a 5k for the first time this past year, somewhat in the spirit of the little engine that could) or a chill pill taken alongside a healthy dose of self-doubt. It’s also what I believe to be the key attitude towards unpacking what’s at the core of Virginia Woolf’s Orlando, which playwright Sarah Ruhl rendered for stage expertly in the most delightful and poignant way possible. Woolf’s biographical novel was a thoughtful exploration of gender roles, but also, a heartfelt love letter to Vita Sackville-West, in the form of a “high spirited romp.” And it’s in that same spirit of playfulness that I’m hoping to enter this transformative world.

There are 3 major elements that I’m looking forward to experimenting with in this production:

1. Using silhouettes (with shadow works and puppetry) to teeter the visual between 2D and 3D and to introduce a surreal component to a story where one thing can morph into another.
2. Incorporating music as well as live sound using everyday objects and sustainable materials for set and props.
3. A “delicate cadaver” process in this ensemble-based storytelling event, as we surely will continuously discover and be delighted by new layers of this narrative.

The silhouette we see is rarely all that there is. The story we hear is often only a beginning. I’ll try, to tell this story with all of you, about all of us. Because “I’m about to understand...”