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REVIEW

The Pink Supper – a powerful, painstaking commemoration of those who have died

December 11, 2019 - by [Julie McNamara](#)

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The Pink Supper commissioned by LADA and The Library of Performing Rights is Nando Messias' passionate response to a global climate of renewed religious hatred, political intolerance and violence towards gender and sexually diverse people. Review by Julie McNamara

Few artistic performances stay with me for long. Nando Messias' *The Pink Supper* is an exception to the rule. It left me reeling. I feel deeply touched to have been witness to Nando's profound and visceral journey that moves us so deftly, so graciously and at times so brutally, between life and death, between righteous rage and survivor's guilt. This event was powerful, painful commemoration, redemptive defiance in the face of unbridled hatred and exquisitely beautiful in its conception. This fabulous creation is so brilliantly charged with Nando's loving care, with astute social observation, with careful dramaturgy, and with the guilt that deadens our hearts for the audacity of remaining alive, for simply breathing.

To begin, the audience arrives through a gallery space with a long table set for 13 places, with echoes of Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party*. Having been encouraged to arrive wearing something pink, we are offered pink vodka or pink lemonade while we enjoy the ceramics, the wonderfully bent wax candles carefully balanced in the candelabras and the sense of celebration with bright pink and gold sequins casually decorating the settings.

A vibrant set of pink dinner plates adorn the table at each place, created in collaboration with ceramicist Aga Robak. Each plate displays a portrait of someone who has been a great influence on Nando Messias. I was delighted to read his explanation of the included images: "people who let me down as well as people who inspired me. I can be too quick to dismiss people for expressing opinions I may disagree with and this leaves no space for my own imperfections..." This gladdens my heart, for too often we shy away from complexities, and leap to shut down the dissenting voices of people who do not tread our streets, do not share our education or wear our colours.

Nando Messias' *The Pink Supper*. Image © Holly Revell

As we wait in the stage area, a regal pink Nando gracefully descends the staircase like the Pink Messiah made flesh. Twelve stately disciples follow behind, in the spirit of pilgrimage. A myriad of metaphors remain with me as I piece them together remembering the fractured images in my mind.

In defiance, he kneels before us, bearing his buttocks and presents his opened arse. The slow and deliberate removal of several pairs of knickers – beautiful, sparkling, silk lingerie, that suddenly become binders, cuffs, constraints – ceremoniously discarded while Nando names a murdered Trans woman with each gesture. This is powerful, painstaking commemoration.

Nando pouring forth his grief, his rage, his deep sorrow: "I left Brazil 16 years ago because I feared for my life. It is getting worse. We have elected a president who thrives on homophobia, transphobia and misogyny, a president who told a woman politician she did not deserve to be raped because she was too ugly."

Nando addressing a photograph of himself as a child: "The little girl inside me was killed off through medication, ECT, through psychiatry. But now she has a chance to live again." The photograph slips and falls. There is an intake of breath.

Nando tenderly retrieves it from the floor, "Oh, but I can pick you up again... I am sorry. I am sorry. I am so sorry...I am so angry.

Sorry for my anger, my rage – caught between survivors' guilt and fear of death. Caught between guilt and rage, sorrow and anger."

Nando's body contorts with pain, as he shifts from his familiar poise and grace into a crazed physical shake down, emerging feet first from the floor; his long limbs decorated with bright pink platform-soled stilettos. A fabulous flamingo.

The statistics are shocking – over 300 deaths of murdered trans women in Brazil this year so far. 23 of those in February alone. That is almost one trans woman murdered a day.

An array of sparkling pink ball gowns and cocktail dresses hang like ghosts on the rack.

Nando strips to his briefs as we watch, an elaborate dance discarding pink gown and shoes, stripped almost to the bone it feels, as the lighting picks out shadows across his ribs and his heartbeat is visible. He asks for help from the audience, from his disciples.

"Choose something nice for me...blue for a boy, pink for a girl, blue for a boy, pink for a boy... I hate pink". He disintegrates into hysterical laughter.

The sheer physicality of this work. Every movement is carefully and precisely crafted. His body becomes a plank, as he stretches across the abyss created as two tables slide apart beneath him. His co-director and long-time collaborator, Bino Sautzvy is suddenly on his back supporting Nando's taut body, suspended between life and death it would seem, as the two tables are removed. It is a vulnerable moment of complete trust between two artists who have co-created for twenty years, since they began at drama school together.

Nando turns to remind us of the savagery that trans women are dealt. He lists the myriad of unspeakable acts that his friends, and peers have been subjected to. Strangled, stabbed...one was beheaded...

He asks for help in choosing one last gown. He is helped into a deep pink cocktail dress with sparkling light reflected from its mirrored sequins. The reflections dance to life across the darkened room, picked out with a mobile phone clutched to Nando's heart. He wraps his head in a deep pink chiffon scarf. And we are left in darkness, but for those shimmering sequins with their sparkling reflectors making their way up the walls about us as Nando ascends the stairs, leaving us gasping for breath.

"Queers don't die, they just become Fairy dust..."

The Pink Supper will tour in 2020. See nandomessias.com for details.'

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