

Intuitive LEAP

By Barbara Y oshida

WHY I LIKE IT: *Drama Editor JANET EHRLICH COLSON writes... Barbara Yoshida's INTUITIVE LEAP is a play that leaps across boundaries from theatre to performance art and blurs the edges of both. It's wildly risky and marvelously weird with the middle-aged WOMAN-AS-HARE in a bunny mask confronting a masculine yet socially awkward MANNY. And did I mention that WOMAN-AS-HARE is buckass naked? THE ENTIRE TIME? That's commitment! Here we are looking at masks as the very tools of social distancing, but the mask in this play takes us back to our shamanic roots and allows for the transformation of the symbolic into a living and breathing effigy in the form of WOMAN-AS-HARE. Behind the mask lies a feminine/Jungian/Dickensian rabbit hole of insights about our relationships and our humanity. Evidently, MANNY has summoned WOMAN-AS-HARE from the bowels of his psyche to teach him some of life's most difficult lessons. WOMAN-AS-HARE doesn't have to do it alone, however. There's a disembodied PRIEST and some vocal cows ready to jump into the mix. Add some shadow puppets and get ready for this play to delight, disturb, and knock your socks off.*

(Fade to black. MANNY sings.)

MANNY

My love has no fingers,

my love has no toes,

but she has plenty of holes,

so it goes, so it goes.

Five stars.

INTUITIVE LEAP

by Barbara Yoshida

The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.

– Albert Einstein

CHARACTERS*

MANNY A rugged looking man. His clothes are mismatched. He wears a leather vest with fringe, cowboy boots, and a bolo tie.

WOMAN-AS-HARE Naked, except for a hare mask; middle aged and full-figured.

PRIEST (voiceover) The voice of an older man.

Roles are identity-flexible.

Playwright can supply the audio recordings of cows.

INTUITIVE LEAP

Dim light reveals a bed, stage left, and a trunk, stage right. A hobby horse leans against the bed and a lasso lies on the bed. WOMAN-AS-HARE sits on the trunk. MANNY bursts into the room, visibly upset. He blindly rushes forward, between WOMAN-AS-HARE and the bed, and stops downstage.

MANNY

(Yelling.) Jesus H. Christ! No matter what I say, she knows better! She treats me like a child! I'm just some stupid schmuck who didn't go to a good enough school. If I'm not smart enough, why did she marry me?

(MANNY grabs his hair, then stretches his arms out wide.)

I can't take this anymore!

WOMAN-AS-HARE

You talkin' to me?

(MANNY whirls to the right and sees WOMAN-AS-HARE for the first time.)

MANNY

(Startled.) Huh?! *(Jumping back.)* What the fuck! Who are you?

WOMAN-AS-HARE

I'm whoever you want me to be.

(MANNY moves aggressively toward WOMAN-AS-HARE.)

MANNY

(Angrily.) What is this?! You the first of three nightly visitors?

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Nah. Don't need to get my wings, either. But relax, I'm on your side.

MANNY

(Laughing giddily.) You related to the Playboy Bunny?

(WOMAN-AS-HARE shakes her head.)

(Leering at her.) Too bad. *(Chuckling.)* That could make things a lot more interesting.

(MANNY picks up the lasso.)

(Excitedly.) I could tie you up! That might be fun!

WOMAN-AS-HARE

In your dreams.

MANNY

(Scowling.) I don't know. I'm not dreaming, but. . . . *(Angrily.)* Look, I can't talk to you! That would be crazy.

(The sound of cows is heard in the distance. MANNY picks up the hobby horse and rides around the room. He twirls the lasso and whinnies as the sound of cows diminishes. He continues to ride, without the lasso.)

Why are you here?

WOMAN-AS-HARE

You called me. You activated that deep area of your psyche—your Jungian unconscious. Why are you riding that thing around?

MANNY

This is my Jungian symbol for you. *(Laughing hysterically.)* Get it? A nightmare!

WOMAN-AS-HARE

How's your sex life?

MANNY

Huh?

WOMAN-AS-HARE

You're having problems with your wife, Sheela.

MANNY

She doesn't understand me. And that's not all. My supervisor doesn't understand me, either. She fired me yesterday.

WOMAN-AS-HARE

And you just had a big fight with Sheela.

MANNY

(Snorting derisively.) As if you care. Yeah, we really got into it. She found out about the other woman I'm seeing. So this is where I live now.

(MANNY flops on the bed, gets up again, and paces.)

Wish I could sleep! I'm so tired! (*Shouting.*) What am I supposed to do? I don't know where to turn! It's all her fault!

WOMAN-AS-HARE

That's what they all say.

(*MANNY grabs the pillow and punches it a few times.*)

But you're the one who started seeing someone else.

MANNY

(*Shouting.*) But I haven't had sex with her! Besides, Sheela drove me to it! And the other one— she started it! It wasn't me! Now there's no way I can stop seeing her! I'm so confused.

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Sexual attraction is a powerful thing.

(*MANNY slows down on the horse.*)

MANNY

Tell me about it! Can you have sex with other animal spirits, or whatever you are?

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Not your concern. *(Pause.)* Have you ever seen a UFO?

(MANNY stops riding, lays the hobby horse down, and faces WOMAN-AS-HARE, his legs spread and hands on hips.)

MANNY

(Defensive, sensing a trap.) I wouldn't tell you if I had.

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Because there's no scientific proof? What about parallel realities?

MANNY

Quantum physics says they exist, so it must be true.

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Then why can't I be from another dimension? A parallel universe?

MANNY

(Smirking.) Yeah, right. More like indigestion—a bit of underdone potato.

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Not everything can be proved by science or rational thinking. Don't you trust your own senses?

(WOMAN-AS-HARE leaps off the trunk. MANNY steps toward her, jabbing his forefinger at her.)

MANNY

(Threatening.) You know what? Scientific proof is exactly what I do need. To judge what's real and what isn't.

(WOMAN-AS-HARE moves toward MANNY. With each step toward him, he backs up.)

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Hah! Even Einstein had to take a break from months of intense work and let his imagination wander, so images could pop into his head and then he said, "Eureka!". His imagination triggered his theory of relativity.

(MANNY and WOMAN-AS-HARE stop, facing off against each other. MANNY thrusts his face to within a few inches of hers.)

MANNY

That has nothing to do with me. I suppose next you're gonna talk about "female intuition."
Spare me! That's just the way women do something because it "feels" right to them. If I did that right now, I'd punch you. Lucky for you, my rational mind tells me to cool it.

(WOMAN-AS-HARE sits back on the trunk.)

WOMAN-AS-HARE

(Slapping the trunk loudly with the palm of her hand.) Hah!

(MANNY turns his back and walks away. His face is twisted in anger.)

You say "female" intuition in a disparaging way, as if men are superior because they're more rational.

MANNY

(Glaring at WOMAN-AS-HARE.) That's just the point! We are superior! We use our intelligence instead of our emotions. Why do I need intuition? I get along fine without it.

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Really? With Sheela? Doesn't seem like you're communicating very well. For starters, if you used your intuition, you might have a clue about how to talk to her.

MANNY

We can't have a normal conversation because she always puts me down. I told her Darwin said humans are more evolved than any animal. And Ms. Know-It-All said I was an idiot!

WOMAN-AS-HARE

She's right about Darwin. A species is more evolved if it's better adapted to its environment. As time goes on, humans are less adapted to their environment because their environment is more and more polluted.

MANNY

We're more intelligent than animals, right?

WOMAN-AS-HARE

You have bigger brains, but that doesn't mean you're more intelligent. You don't know enough about animals to be sure! Are your communication skills better than a dolphin's?

(MANNY gets on the hobby horse again. He rides around, ignoring WOMAN-AS-HARE.

The sound of cows returns.)

MANNY

I think you're hare-brained!

(WOMAN-AS-HARE *leaps off the trunk in front of MANNY, stopping his ride.*)

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Is that supposed to insult me? In many cultures, the hare is the animal that leaps up suddenly, so she symbolizes a quick mind and creative thought.

(WOMAN-AS-HARE *sits on the bed. MANNY starts riding again.*)

MANNY

Big deal. I don't care! Leave me alone!

WOMAN-AS-HARE

But you told Sheela, "What does it matter if some species goes extinct?"

MANNY

(MANNY *stops in front of WOMAN-AS-HARE.*) Okay, we need animals for food. And there's horseback riding (*he whinnies*), dog racing, . . . and cockfights! Yeah, cockfights! Now we're talkin'!

(MANNY *starts riding again.*)

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Animals have always taught us things, since our earliest days on the planet. And now so many of them are going extinct, we'll never know what we could have learned, what we've lost.

(The sound of cows recedes. MANNY stops riding and faces WOMAN-AS-HARE.)

MANNY

By the way, why are you naked?

WOMAN-AS-HARE

(Mock bewilderment.) Just noticed? *(Tauntingly.)* Does it turn you on?

MANNY

I don't think you're supposed to be naked. *(Lasciviously.)* Maybe I should jump your bones, then I'd know you're real.

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Oooh, you're a randy one! So it's not just Sheela, it's any woman!

(WOMAN-AS-HARE poses seductively on the bed and beckons to him.)

(Amused, tauntingly.) Come on, big guy, let's see what you've got!

(MANNY drops the hobby horse and approaches WOMAN-AS-HARE. He faces her, his arms folded.)

MANNY

(Angrily.) No, not any woman—and certainly not you! It's the other woman—my piece on the side! She's a succubus! I can't work or think about anything but her. And Sheela knows I'm seeing her. It's ugly. But I can't stop!

(WOMAN-AS-HARE kneels on the bed and faces MANNY.)

WOMAN-AS-HARE

What the fuck's the matter with you? (She slaps him.) Stop whining. Just choose! Either work things out with Sheela or call it quits with her! What a pussy! You can't even trust your own senses. Am I real? You're the smart one, so prove it! But you're too scared to make a move one way or the other. You disgust me.

MANNY

That's your advice? (He leers at her.) I gotta admit, I kinda liked being slapped, but how does that help?

(Cross-fade into a pool of light center-stage. MANNY steps into it and kneels, hands folded in front of him. He looks up and speaks, as if confessing to a priest. Low light reveals WOMAN-AS-HARE, stage left.)

MANNY

You know I'm married, right? But I'm seeing someone else and I just can't help myself. I know it's wrong, Father. But I don't feel guilty! I should, but I don't.

(The voice of a PRIEST comes from above, and WOMAN-AS-HARE lip-syncs as if it's coming from her.)

PRIEST *(voiceover)*

Don't worry, son. I'll have a talk with your parents and they'll sort it out.

MANNY

What?! You can't talk to them! This is supposed to be confidential!

PRIEST *(voiceover)*

You came to me for help, didn't you? I know what's best. Anything else you want to tell me?

MANNY

I've been visited by a goddess of mischief, an apparition. She's part woman, part animal. And she's naked. What's it mean?

PRIEST (*voiceover*)

It means you need to get away from here. You could just fly away. Do you fly in your dreams? Maybe go up on the roof and see if you can fly.

MANNY

I made my wife cry. But I wasn't even moved. I feel like I'm not even human. Maybe I'm already dead and don't know it. I'm gonna kill someone—really! I'm gonna do it, I just know it!

PRIEST (*voiceover*)

Are you on drugs?

MANNY

No! I just think I'm losing my mind.

PRIEST (*voiceover*)

Instead of killing someone, maybe you should commit suicide.

MANNY

Are you really a priest?

WOMAN-AS-HARE

(Continuing the priest's dialogue.) Depends on who you ask.

MANNY

(Looking up.) Wait a minute! You sound like that animal woman!

WOMAN-AS-HARE

(Wicked laughter.) Ha, ha, ha, ha!

(Fade to black.)

(Light comes up on MANNY waltzing around the room, embracing a blow-up sex doll.

WOMAN-AS-HARE stands in front of the trunk, watching. MANNY sings.)

MANNY

My love has no fingers,
my love has no toes,
but she has plenty of holes,
so it goes, so it goes.

(MANNY casts the doll aside and goes to WOMAN-AS-HARE.)

WOMAN-AS-HARE

(Bugs Bunny voice.) Eeeeeeh, what's up, Doc? *(Chuckling, taunting him.)* How'd it go with the priest?

(MANNY reaches with both hands as if to put them around her neck.)

MANNY

Aaaargh! I'm gonna kill you, bitch!

(WOMAN-AS-HARE easily slips out of his reach and moves away.)

WOMAN-AS-HARE

(She snorts incredulously.) You dumb-ass! If you could believe your own senses, you'd know you can't kill me! *(Pause.)* Poor you. So misunderstood.

(WOMAN-AS-HARE sits on the trunk.)

MANNY

(Shouting.) Don't make fun of me! *(Arms outstretched.)* I'm really on the edge here!

(MANNY *puts a pillow on the floor in front of the trunk and sits, facing* WOMAN-AS-HARE.)

WOMAN-AS-HARE

I bet Sheela likes to go to museums and look at paintings. Do you like to do that with her?

MANNY

Always makes me feel stupid. She doesn't respect me! Just because I can't understand art. I don't need it! Poetry or theater or any of that.

WOMAN-AS-HARE

What about music? Music makes you feel a certain way, doesn't it? You could share that with her. It's the same when you're looking at a painting. Pick one you like, then just give it some time. There's nothing to understand. Just feel it—give your thoughts and emotions free rein—listen to your intuition! You know, many of our imaginings and feelings can't be explained, even to ourselves. We know they're real, but we can't prove it. So we create art—painting, music, dance.

MANNY

At least you have to agree that humans create art and animals don't. Isn't that evidence of our superiority?

WOMAN-AS-HARE

I don't think so. There was a gorilla, named Koko, who enjoyed painting. Does that surprise you?

MANNY

Creative because she put paint on something?

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Can you say it's not creative?

(MANNY gets up and stands, facing WOMAN-AS-HARE. They make hand shadow puppets of hares. Fingers and hands are illuminated so the audience can see them. Each hare image is different. Silhouettes are projected against the back wall, enlarged significantly. The hares' ears twitch and the legs move as if they're talking.)



Koko was also taught to sign. Her vocabulary was the same level as a three-year-old human child.

MANNY

Oh my God, that's incredible!

WOMAN-AS-HARE

And she understood two thousand words of spoken English. She even understood abstract concepts like "good" and "fake." Koko adopted a kitten and created a name for him. She loved the other beings she became attached to, and grieved when they left or died. She could be mischievous, too. Once, when she didn't like someone, she called the woman a toilet!

(The silhouettes vanish. Slowly, MANNY turns his head toward WOMAN-AS-HARE.)

When she was asked where gorillas go when they die, Koko signed, "Comfortable hole bye."

(WOMAN-AS-HARE waves "bye-bye." MANNY buries his face in his hands, clearly distraught. Sound of crying cows is heard again, louder than before.)

MANNY

(Lifting his head.) Oh, sweet Jesus. *(His face is distorted, anguished.)* Why are the cows crying?
I thought they only went “Moo.”

WOMAN-AS-HARE

Come on, man! What do you feel?

MANNY

They’ve lost something. They’re grieving. They’re in pain!

(Sound of crying cows changes to the sound of a single cow.)

(Distraught.) She’s away from the herd, alone, and she’s searching for something. She’s missing something. Aaaargh! I can’t stand it! It’s heart-breaking!

(MANNY drops to his knees as the sound of the cow dies away.)

(To WOMAN-AS-HARE.) I want to call Sheela. God, I’m so tired.

(MANNY lies on the floor in a fetal position, pillow behind his head. Lights dim.

WOMAN-AS-HARE goes to MANNY and covers his face with the pillow, pressing down on it with both hands.)

(Blackout.)

END

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *During a 1999 artist residency at Ucross in Wyoming, I was invited to watch some calves being branded; the male calves were also being castrated. It was the first time these mothers had ever been separated from their calves. I was deeply affected by the agonizing cries of the mothers, and I was shocked—I hadn't known that cows could make that sound—that they made any sounds other than "Moo." I rushed back to get my recording equipment. I felt this "language" would affect anyone who heard it. So, when I began writing about the value of intuition in a society dominated by rational thinking, I remembered the sound of those crying cows and knew it had to be a driving force in the play—the trigger for Manny's transformation. My background is visual art, so I also wanted to engage people with visual stimuli, like the hand shadow puppets, another "language." And the woman wearing a hare mask is an important visual manifestation of the non-rational. In this play, the rational is viewed through the lens of absurdity (see Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*, Albee's *The Zoo Story*, and Guare's *The Loveliest Afternoon of the Year*). Is it really a priest? —or is it the hare woman? How absurd that Manny would put himself in her hands!*

AUTHOR'S BIO: **Barbara Yoshida** is a multi-disciplinary artist whose work has been exhibited throughout NYC, the U.S., and internationally. Her short play, *Language Games*, can be seen in *Fleas on the Dog*, Issue 6, Part 2 (plays & screenplays), and was presented in NYC's Rogue Theater Festival in December, 2020. Also during December, a trailer of the film, *Language Games*, was shown prior to an artist talk in *AD ABSURDUM: The Politics and Poetics of Absurdity* by the Philadelphia Avant-Garde Studies Consortium (PASC). After taking Peculiar Works Project production and publicity photos for over a decade and editing too many grant applications, she began working as a dramaturg on projects such as *Planet X* (Black Mountain College), *2 Jane Jacobs* (Cherry Lane Theater) and *Son of Cock-Strong* (La MaMa). Other than English, she speaks French, Japanese, and Spanish (some more than others). She has served on the Board of PWP since its inception in 1993. You can visit Barbara at www.barbarayoshida.com Her latest monograph (below) is now available.

MOON VIEWING

Megaliths by Moonlight

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Representing ten years of travel and research, *Moon Viewing: Megaliths by Moonlight* surveys megalithic stones from Sweden to West Africa and east to Armenia. Night photography emphasizes the relationship to stars and planets.