

Astrid Hadad

When I am an old woman I shall wear a dress made of boobs

Astrid Hadad y Los Tarzanes

Chan Centre for the Performing Arts

Admission: \$45.00

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BY JENNIFER FLYE

It usually begins as a costume idea. Astrid Hadad, performance artist extraordinaire, is a creative and exquisite matriarch. Her performances have been rocking audiences for a while and she is really excited about coming to Vancouver. Hadad is a rule breaker. Hailing from Mexico and appearing on stages world-wide, she is a modern day cabaret singer with a hankering for stirring up the pot. Now a legitimate star in her own right, her show is a sarcastic and deep kaleidoscope where politics ooze from the seams and her frenzied commitment bowls you over with emotion. Her favorite ranchero songs emerge over the course of the performance, warped in a proverbial mirror and hollered out for you to feel. But it's not just her voice that manages to resonate—her outfits achieve it too, and well they should, as each song is accompanied by a living and vibrant art costume. Think Frida Kahlo mixed with the bellowing sassafras of Peaches.

Hadad grew up in the Yucatan in a devout Catholic family of 11. She now bases herself in the seething colours of Mexico City and loves it a lot as, "there is so much to see every day... I get ideas from so many places: small stores, people, craft stores." She even got one idea from a plastic bolt of flowered tablecloth covering. "I saw the flowers on this plastic and thought of them around my waist... It was like a dress in my mind." From the initial idea, her songs are layered in and the process is in motion.

Each song in her repertoire involves an elaborate change of garb, demanding anything from a from breast-covered puffy skirt to a massive sombrero with a vibrating hand on it. The result is haunting, funny and generous, and perhaps a true representation of an artist's mind. It may sound clichéd, but it is very rare that vivid imagery from an artist's "initial idea" is translated into full-blown presentation. It is Hadad's goal, however, to enrich her performances with a lot of eye candy. She wants the audience to be entertained, and doesn't think the language barrier matters. Integrating as much of her Mexican heritage into her performances and costumes as she can, don't be surprised if you see everything from sparkly fairy lights to religious icons, beloved cacti and flapping eyeballs. Her educated mind is filled with rich and verdant humour and she successfully expresses it eloquently through her wardrobe. Her costumes could, quite literally, be displayed in a museum.

Her single performance at the Chan Centre (part of the LIVE Biennial of Performance Art running from October 15 to November 26) should be fabulous in spite of her nerves. "I get so nervous before my show. I worry that people won't like it," she laughs. One would automatically presume that a brazen queen of political kitch would be full of confidence, but, surprisingly, Hadad is naturally shy. When asked her about



Photo by Pancho Gilardi

her first performance in childhood, I'd expected to hear a story about a young girl prancing around in a costume singing.

"Oh," she exclaims, laughing loudly. "That is so funny. I haven't thought of this in years. No, no," she says, laughing even louder. "I was so scared. I remember one time when I was about five years-old and I had to sing with my brothers and sisters. It is so funny—I ran off stage crying into the arms of my Mother. I was so scared." Which addresses an interesting point: where outrageous performers are often thought of as type "A" people, many of them are not. The stage is what provides them with the outlet for expression. "I am like the female Jekyll and Hyde," Hadad states.

Eventually, Hadad ended up in theatre training at the Centro Universitario de Teatro. The intense physical theatre program helped hone her skills and from there she toured Europe (and even worked as a soap actress!). Ultimately, though, her desire for good political sparring and an almost obsessive interest in female Mexican archetypes began to take over her art, leading to her first performances in Mexico which were met with surprise. Her digs

at the worshipped Diego Rivera weren't appreciated by many, nor was her overall take on the misogynistic reality she saw. "Mexico is very misogynistic," she says. "It can be very hard for women. It is still easier to just marry a man." She certainly isn't shy when it comes to her beliefs and translating them into performance. For example, in a past show she confronted issues such as wife beating and the women who "stay." Amazingly, she does it with combined humour and tragedy, which is what makes it so compelling to watch. Indeed, once she exported her performances, she discovered enthusiastic audiences across the world.

Historically, in numerous cultures, women have used the arts to express angst and discord. So, although Hadad may have some critics who say her current show is a step beyond the norm, I would judge it to be a perfectly distinct performance honouring the crafty feminists of her homeland. Women have sung, woven, danced and painted their way out of some insanely oppressive cultures, and Hadad's cabaret is sure to add to this collective consciousness in amounts not easily measured.

Fornicast

BY STARR PIMP [Forecast for Oct. 21-Oct. 28]

It's the beginning of the end when...



Aries (March 21 – April 20)

Your lover doesn't say "here, kitty, kitty" anymore. Constantly criticizes your copulatory skills and doesn't think you know which end of the Clear Blue Easy stick to piss on.



Taurus (April 21 – May 20)

"Honeykins, let's cash in our combined RRSPs and open an orphanage in Calcutta together!" If that doesn't rattle your cozy cage, you're probably not a true Taurus. (Or they're just incredibly hot.)



Gemini (May 21 – June 20)

Your lover coos, "Hey baby, how do you feel about making our little love thing monogamous?" and you realize you forgot to log out of the threesomes-only chat room before climbing into bed.



Cancer (June 21 – July 20)

That hot breath in your ear goes something like, "I can't tell you how happy I am now that I've finally found a person I can trust to share my desires with. (beat) I can only cum from fucking bareback in the park and getting busted by the cops."



Leo (July 21 – August 21)

"Actually, I've had better."



Virgo (August 22 – September 21)

The writing on the wall won't come off with Fantastik Plus or Borax. Their pubic hair on the floor next to those crusty socks brings up unsavory memories of your art school grad installation. Pay the damn cable bill already.



Libra (September 22 – October 21)

You're not sure what they meant by what they said. Maybe what they actually meant was something else. Didn't they say they really liked being strapped to the hood? Okay maybe, but not that often. There was furniture here this morning, wasn't there?



Scorpio (Oct 22 – November 21)

He/She: "I'd like us to re-evaluate the sexual nature of our relationship." You: "Is that new luggage?"



Sagittarius (Nov 22 – Dec 21)

Your partner finds your spontaneity exhausting. They demand you stick to the to-do list. Which leaves you with two choices—put "plunder partner mercilessly with fat rubber cock" next to "pick up dry cleaning", or just plunder them mercilessly with a fat rubber cock while they pack their bags.



Capricorn (December 22 – Jan 21)

They've said it five times, moved across the country, married someone else and sued you for harassment but all you heard was: "I just need some space."



Aquarius (Jan 22 – February 20)

Your lover wants to replace your French Restoration dining suite with a burnished teak and chrome set from Ikea. You were happy to pay for the reconstructive surgery, but now it's gone too far. Button your lip or button your pants. Either way, the dream is over.



Pisces (February 21 – March 20)

"That's your secret fantasy? (derisive snort) Not too inspired if you ask me." Well you didn't; you just told them and that took a while, given the epic nature and multi-media content.