

Links across the pond.

Last October whilst at Long Beach, California I had the great pleasure to meet Begoña Echeverría a talented musician, published author, playwright and academic from the Riverside Campus of the University of California.

As her name suggests she is of Basque origin; she is a fluent Basque speaker and comes from one of the several Basque communities that flourish in the USA and keep the Basque language and culture alive.

We spent several intense and enjoyable hours discussing the history of the Basque children who came to UK, the prevailing attitude in the USA and the support that was given despite this.

Carmen Kilner



October 2019. Begoña Echeverría and Carmen Kilner, Long Beach, Ca.

“Picasso Presents Gernika”

Report by Begoña Echeverría (University of California - UC)

In the early 1990s, I was studying in the Basque Country and met Manuela, who lived there, although she was British. After the bombing of Gernika, her father and his brother had been evacuated to England. Eventually, their mother asked for his brother to return—but didn't send for him. “My father never forgave his mother for that,” Manuela told me. He died never learning why he was left behind.

This is all I know of this story. Manuela and I never discussed it again and I never met her father. But this story stayed with me for over 20 years until 2012, when I felt compelled to write a play based on it. “Picasso Presents Gernika” opens with the bombing of Gernika on April 26, 1937. Terrified, a mother sends her son and daughter to England--but only calls one of them back to Spain. Devastated, the child left behind eventually becomes a psychiatrist for child refugees. Only when a grandnephew attends a reunion for evacuees in England does the psychiatrist learn the heartbreaking reason the mother made the decision she did. The play is narrated by Picasso as he paints his anti-war masterpiece, [Guernica](#), vowing never to display it in Spain so long as tyranny (in the form of Franco) reigns. But he never sees [Guernica](#) again: Franco outlives him by two years.

Interweaving fictionalized characters with music, videos, newsreels, historical newspaper articles and other archival materials—including photographs archived by the Basque Children Association '37 UK and a video forwarded by Carmen Sanchez Kilner, who I had the pleasure to meet last year—“Picasso Presents Gernika” considers the connections between war, art and human suffering: What does it take for a mother to give up her children to a foreign country in the hopes that they will have greater opportunity there? How does a refugee child make sense of being left behind? What happens to the

refugee child called back home – to the mother and country they love but a dictator they hate? What did it take for Picasso to give up his masterpiece only to see its message repeatedly go unheeded?

In cooperation with UC Riverside's Department of Theatre, Film and Digital Production, I co-produced a staged reading of the play at Chino Community Theater in May, 2019, featuring British actors Bella Merlin and Miles Anderson as well as student actors. I am organizing staged readings at two universities in southern California in 2020 and 2021, and welcome the opportunity to have the play staged other places. I will be visiting the archives at the University of Southampton and the University of Warwick next spring, to look for additional materials for the multimedia presentation that accompanies the script.

Unfortunately, the The Gernika Generation was a harbinger of refugee crises that continue to this day. I hope that "Picasso Presents Gernika" will not only bring the story of the Basque children of '37 to wider audiences, but that the play will also speak to – and stand in solidarity with -- other migrant and refugee communities around the world.

Begoña Echeverria.

IMAGES AND DOCUMENTATION

Southworth Spanish Civil War Collection (UC San Diego)
The Claremont Colleges Library (Special Collections)
The Association for the UK Basque Children (especially
Carmen Kilner Sanchez)
The Guernica Generation by Dorothy Legarreta

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Louella Nelson and her writing groups
The Department of Theatre, Film and Digital Production
(University of California, Riverside)
Margaret Nash

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

"Gernika" is the name of the Basque town.
"Guernica" refers to Picasso's mural.
"Andrea" means "woman."
"Aitor" means "testimony."

DEDICATION

In memory of my parents
Alejandro & Pilarcho Echeverria
GOIAN BEGO

PICASSO

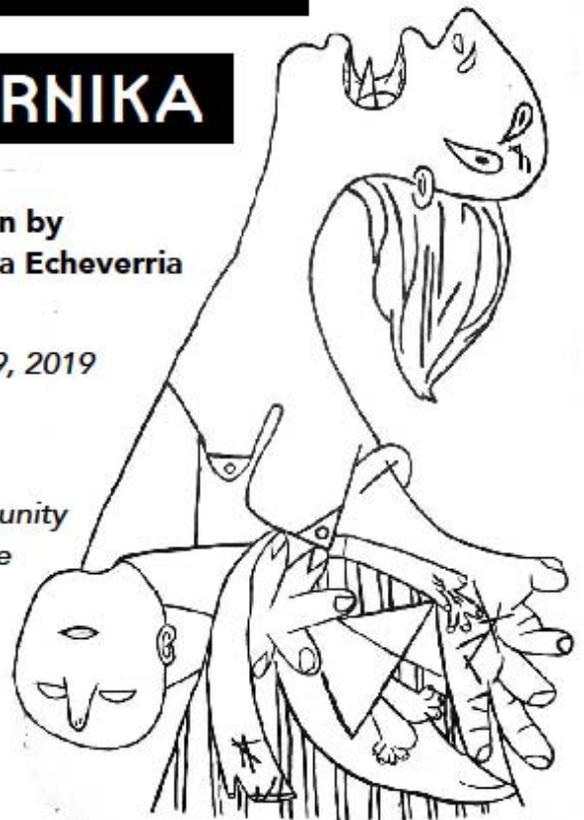
PRESENTS

GERNIKA

Written by
Begoña Echeverria

May 19, 2019
7 pm

Chino
Community
Theatre



PICASSO

PRESENTS

GERNIKA

DIRECTOR

Paul Larson

THE CAST

Miles Anderson
Marvin Dollano
Charlotte Gallagher
Santiago Iniguez
Bella Merlin
Cynthia Navarro
Chelsea Ramirez
Jeff Richards (understudy)

THE CREW

Begoña Echeverria: Producer
Bella Merlin: Casting
Annika Speer: Supervising
Dramaturg
Paul Larson: Technical Supervisor
Hannah Hyatt: Producer
Emma Scrivener: Assistant
Producer, Lighting/Sound
Josselin Ramirez: Dramaturg
Elizabeth Cisneros: Projections
Katy Hammond: Sound
Amy Lee: Stage Manager &
Photography
Robby Meredith: Lighting
Audio-visual design: Hannah Hyatt,
Citlalli Sanchez,
Amanda Joy Teano
Videography: Hannah Hyatt,
Christopher Warson,
Ernesto Mejia-Torres

MUSIC

"Gernikako Arbola"
Jose Maria Iparragirre
"Inglaterra Esker Mila"
Begoña Echeverria
"Sentimentu Asko Dauskat"
Joxe Zapiain (lyrics)
Belinda Thom (music)
"Ene Haurrak" Begoña Echeverria
(lyrics & vocals)/Belinda Thom (music)
Song Recording & Mixing:
Belinda Thom & Martie Echito

GRAPHICS

Publicity Poster: Michael Witmer
Program: Diana Myers Hyatt

LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

Chino Basque Club, Candida
Echeverria, Pilar Gallagher, Roseanne
Iniguez, Jeff Larson, Karen Larson,
Paul Larson

On April 26, 1937, Hitler's Condor Legion bombed Gernika, the sacred city of the Basques. Terrified, a mother sends her children to England—but only sees one of them ever again. Picasso paints his anti-war masterpiece Guernica, vowing never to display it in Spain until democracy returns—he dies before this happens. Interweaving fictionalized characters with images, music, videos and historical events from 1937 to 2012, Picasso Presents Gernika considers the connections between war, art and human suffering.