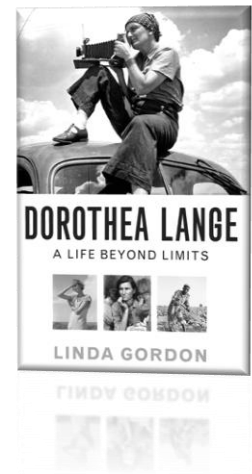


As the author of a biography of Dorothea Lange, I responded with surprise and puzzlement when John Dietrich first contacted me about his plan for a musical about her life. It was after all a most counter-intuitive metamorphosis he proposed, from the visual —her *métier*—to the musical. And she was far from the female heroine we are used to— not always sympathetic, complicated, beset by the contradictions that surround so many modern women. She was 40 years old before she began the career that made her a great photographer; she divorced a dazzling artist and then married the least likely leading man one could imagine (Paul Taylor, stolid, unexpressive economics professor); she was guilty of placing her children in foster care so she could work; and her deepest motives were read as unfeminine in her time.



But the very fact that John found her interesting made me find John interesting and it was a case of unusually fine judgment on my part. *Things as They Are* is superb, worth every bit of the enormous effort Dietrich and others put into it.

The music, the lyrics and the images meld into a powerful portrait of a modern hero in a particular place and time. Like Lange's photographs themselves, Dietrich's Lange is never a stereotype, always a one-of-a-kind individual, driven by creative ambition, curiosity, and a deeply democratic toward others. *Things as They Are* offers succinct and deft treatment of many of the obstacles Lange faced: her disability, her detractors, the hard times of the depression, her lack of female colleagues, her attempts to do too much. The totality of this piece of musical theater is an eye-opening and dramatic exploration of the life of an artist.

I wish I could bring my students to see it. I wish all of Lange's descendants could see it. I'd love to be able to recommend it to professors and teachers of history, of women's studies and of photography, so I hope it will continue to be performed in years to come.

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Author of "Impounded: Dorothea Lange and the Censored Images of Japanese Internment"

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