

# From Monologues to Dialogues

The stage, like a body of water, contains more than what appears on its surface. What rises from the depths of the theatrical ocean — memory, blood, hope, fear, desire — washes across the stage for those who wish to see it. The stage also is something we must cross to create a new scene, to act out a new chapter in the human drama.

From April 27 to May 6, Cuban artists from all over the world will make that journey, transforming Miami into the locale where the next chapter of the Cuban story will take place. Twenty-three artists will cross the Florida Straits — joined by countless others from Europe, Latin America, and the United States — to initiate the first **International Monologue Festival** and the first meeting in Miami between Cubans from the island and exiled Cubans from around the world. The festival is being produced by Teatro La Ma Teodora with the University of Miami, Miami Light Project, and Florida International University, and will bring some of the most talented Cuban artists and writers from Spain,

Venezuela, Brazil, Mexico, France, Cuba, New York, and Miami to our stages.

While the festival has its political implications, first and foremost it is a celebration of the island's rich theatrical tradition. "No other Latin-American country has produced so many important playwrights as Cuba," observes Alberto Sarraín, artistic director of Teatro La Ma Teodora and director of the festival. "In Cuban theater the traditions of Brecht, Beckett, and Grotowski converge with the island's African and Spanish heritage to create an enigmatic musicality and vibrancy." The content of the festival will reflect the entire gamut of this tradition. In the more traditional vein, Compañía de Teatral Hubert de Blanck from Cuba will perform *Un Poco de Aire Frio de Virgilio Piñera*, a work extracted from *Aire Frio*, written by Piñera, one of that nation's most important playwrights. On the other hand, Eugenio Hernández's monologue *Las Lamentaciones de Obba Yuru* deals directly with Afro-Cuban themes. "From the most conservative to the most avant-garde, these monologues are all definitively and exquisitely Cuban," Sarraín says. Besides being more cost-efficient and mobile, the monologue demands a level of artistry and intimacy that often is lost in larger productions. As Sarraín explains, "A monologue is a privilege. It is a genre that utilizes the best actors and allows them to

shine in ways that other genres don't, because it relies solely on the skill of the actor. You can't hide behind the set design or lights. The monologue is the essence of theater."

In addition to being a showcase for talent, the festival is an opportunity for Cubans from the around world to share their work. *Las Penas Saben Nadar*, written by Abelardo Estorino, one of the oldest and most respected playwrights in Cuba, has been presented at festivals all over the globe and will be seen for the first time in Miami. Teatro de la Luna, the youngest group to perform at the festival, will present the world premiere of the monologue *El Enano en la Botella*, written especially for the festival by Abilio Estevez and directed by Raul Martin from Cuba.

Finally Alberto Pedro, author of *Delirio Habanero*, one of the most important plays in the Cuban canon, will open the fest with the debut of his monologue *Esperando a Odiseo*. And like Odysseus, making his way through uncharted waters to get back home, the International Monologue Festival signifies a much-awaited step toward reunion. As Pedro confirms in his program notes: "To premiere in Miami is not like premiering in a foreign land."

All performances will be in Spanish. For information about the festival or to make ticket reservations, call 305-227-6681. — Mia Leonin