



CONTEMPORARY PLAYS BY WOMEN OF COLOR

An Anthology

Second Edition

Edited by Roberta Uno

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ROUTLEDGE

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Marissa Chibas

Biography

Marissa Chibas is a writer and performer. She is the recipient of the 2015 TCG Fox Fellowship in Distinguished Achievement. Her solo performance, *Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary*, produced by the CalArts Center for New Performance (CNP), has toured the U.S., Europe, and Mexico. For CNP, Marissa coadapted the award-winning production of Gertrude Stein's *Brewsie and Willie* and played Edgar in *King Lear*, a production that toured to the Frictions Festival in France. Marissa has acted in over 50 productions and two dozen American premieres, including *The Keening*, by Umberto Dorado, at the ART in Cambridge, *Two Sisters and a Piano*, by Nilo Cruz, at the McCarter, and The Mark Taper Forum productions of *The House of Bernarda Alba* and Eduardo Machado's *The Floating Island Plays*. On Broadway, she performed in *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* and *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, as well as off Broadway and in many prominent resident theaters, including Arena Stage, Alley Theater, and the Yale Repertory Theatre. Her silent film/performance piece, *Clara's Los Angeles*, was presented at REDCAT's NOW FEST and the San Diego Latino Film Festival. Marissa is on the Theater School faculty at CalArts where she heads Duende CalArts, a CNP initiative that collaborates with innovative Latin@ and Latin American artists to create adventurous performance. For Duende, she conceived and wrote *Shelter*, which premiered in April 2016 in Los Angeles and was subsequently performed at the Kennedy Center. *Shelter* focuses on the Central American unaccompanied children who are seeking asylum in the U.S. She is working on a performance piece entitled *The Second Woman*, opening in the fall of 2016 at the Bootleg Theater in Los Angeles.



Artistic statement

Telling these stories is both an act of defiance and of reconciliation. I am defying those that have excluded my father and others from Cuban history, and I seek reconciliation with my ancestors who continually disturbed my waking and dreaming

life until I finally wrote and performed this play. It is an honor to unearth and give voice to those lost and forgotten. This play taught me the healing effect for both the audiences I performed as well as myself—of bringing to light what has been kept in shadow.

I write from a sense of urgency. During a recent talk back for *Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary*, I was asked if I regretted that politics had been such a big part of my life. I responded that I thought not being political was a luxury I know nothing about. Most of the people I know have no choice but to be political in order to survive and to make their futures, and the futures of those they love, better. I create work that responds to the urgent needs my various communities grapple with—whether it be identity, immigration, or aging. I am dedicated to revealing complexities that reject polarized views of left/right, black/white, for/against. I demand that my work challenge easy answers, codifications, and misconceptions.

Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary voices stories erased from Cuban history. My father, Raul, cowrote the 1957 Cuban manifesto. Each time I perform this play, I claim his place in the Cuban struggle against tyranny. Another dominant figure in the play is my uncle, Eduardo Chibas, who was the leading candidate for the 1952 Cuban presidency. He committed suicide during an impassioned live radio broadcast a few months before the election. His legacy haunted me as a child and to this day has tremendous impact on the Cuban community, both on and off the island.

The other central figure is my mother, Dalia, runner-up Miss Cuba 1959. In fact, my father was a judge at the pageant, which is how they met. I used to joke to friends that in my Cuban family things never happened, they OCCURRED! Being the daughter of a Cuban revolutionary and a beauty queen meant having a grand share of drama and hilarity. My solo performance has been a chance to bring forward some of these combustible elements that make up my life as well as that of my family. I share these revolutionary stories through a personal lens and the personal through the prism of the revolution.

Everywhere I have performed *Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary* I have been struck by how many people approach me afterwards to tell me their tales of exodus. They either lived through something similar or are inspired to bring to light the journeys of their own families. More and more, our world seems to be made of migrants and those in exile. The story of exile is of increasing interest—so many people have been uprooted and forced to adapt to a new country and its ways. It is moving for me to see the effect of this deeply personal play on others with very different backgrounds. I am grateful *Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary* is able to speak to their struggle.

I end the play listing the various things I am the daughter of. In this gesture, I claim who I am and what I stand for. As much as Cuba is and always will be a sacred land for me, I am also aware that “I am the daughter whose deep roots travel far beyond homeland and geographical borders.” What I seek as an artist are those deep roots, to connect with my audience in a way that reaches their hearts, and to inspire soulful reflection. The recent historical events that have opened the way between



King Lear, a production
acted in over 50 pro-
the Keening, by Umberto
to, by Nilo Cruz, at the
House of Bernarda Alba
dway, she performed in
of Broadway and in many
Theater, and the Yale
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the U.S. and Cuba have left me cautiously optimistic. It is a great dream of mine to be able to share these stories in the land of my ancestors and to see the Cuban people emerge from this transition more empowered and able to forge their own new identity as a sovereign nation. Perhaps that day will come soon.

Production history

Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary was produced by the CalArts Center for New Performance and premiered at REDCAT in 2007. The play toured to the Darryl Roth Theater in NYC for INTAR, Teatro Lobo in Miami, Teatro Experimental in Guadalajara, The Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Encuentro 2014 at LATC, and Arts Emerson in Boston. The production was directed by Mira Kingsley, and the dramaturg was Anne Garcia Romero. The play was written and performed by Marissa Chibas.

Original design team included Dan Evans (Set), Rebecca Marcus (Lights), Colbert Davis (Sound), Adam Flemming (Video), Karen Murk (Costume), and Victor Sandoval (Stage Manager).

3 *Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary* Marissa Chibas

As the audience enters MARISSA is standing with her back towards the audience facing the set down stage center. The stage is either covered in sand or has 10 or so rocks placed in different parts of the perimeter of the stage. A large trumpet speaker lies on its side downstage right. This is a set element that she uses throughout the play, sitting on it and using it in a variety of ways. There is a video screen upstage and across the space.

We hear a sound collage of voices, music, Eddy Chibas's last speech, etc.—all audio elements of Marissa's family and Cuban American life. As the sound texture increases she slowly lifts her right leg up and places it on the stage. She turns to face the audience. She is wearing a green army jacket, green pants and underneath, a white buttoned long sleeved shirt. On her neck is tied a bright scarf, a white handkerchief in her pocket. During the following sequence MARISSA spins slowly upstage. The text in bold is said while in gestures of drowning.

MARISSA So, what is this place? I am astonished (*gasp of breath*) I am drowning. So, what is this place? A cave. No...much more. I am swimming in a cave with a fifty-foot waterfall in the Venezuelan Amazon on my honeymoon with a tour party of six and an indigenous guide, named Stanley. I am also in the thrall of something within - my past overwhelms me, drags me down, calls on me to remember. **Cuba acuerdate!** My life passing before me, spinning through this space like a whirlpool. **I am swallowing water, I can't keep my head above the water line, I can't breathe.** I submit to the power, my heart's center, Cuba calling on me to remember the forgotten stories of my people, my family, the legacy of exile - **Grab on to the wall of the cave, I can't, my hand is slipping** - joy, hope, despair

all nurtured in the womb of what I know of as Cuba. There's nothing to hold on to here, nothing solid to pull me to safety. I can stay here in this timeless place. I can let the cold fluid fill my mouth and lungs. Should I release in to this timelessness? **Cuba, remember.** I can just keep gulping until the waterfall swallows me whole. It's this moment that is hard to pull away from and call out for help, this extended-time moment. **I'm drowning.** It's so tempting to stay, to let myself drown. **Cuba, acuerdate.** The cave walls have parted and I have never been anywhere like this, I am not afraid. I am in this eternal second between worlds and it really can go either way.

(We see the sugar cane footage from "I am Cuba" projected across the space. MARISSA is consumed full body by the image. MARISSA continues to move across the space engaging with the image behind her. The text in bold below is said by the woman Raul meets in Union Square. She has a heavy New York accent.)

MARISSA (*MARISSA hums "Siboney" by Ernesto Lecuona.*)

My father used to play me that song while regaling me with of stories from his youth. My father Raul was first imprisoned at the age of 15 by the Cuban dictator Machado. He had been handing out leaflets promoting social democratic change. His brother Eddy, my uncle, had been imprisoned a month earlier for political reasons and Raul wanted to follow in his big brother's footsteps. Whatever Eddy did, Raul wanted to do. Eddy was Raul's super hero in the flesh, moving up in the ranks of student revolutionaries and making a name for himself as a political writer and leader. After Raul's prison term, his parents, who were part of

Cuba's elite upper class, sent their fifteen year old son to the U.S. in the hopes that the political climate and Raul would both cool off. While there he stayed with his Tia Conchita in Washington D.C. and made trips by train to New York City, which at that time was a twelve hour ordeal.

YOUNG RAUL Union Square, New York City, 1932

The Great Depression

Constant activity

Fiery voices, young and old, some with American accents many from foreign lands

Can I be a part of this?

Hot dogs get your...

To the North – Guardian Life Insurance

To the West – Amalgamated bank

To the East – Union Square Bank

To the South – a huge Wrigley's chewing gum sign

Cruu Cruuu

A group gathers around a large tree

One young woman speaks –

Here in America the greatest, the richest country in the world, where we have boundless resources and stockpiles enough to feed the entire Nation, ten million people are unemployed and struggle each day to –

She has a beautiful voice, nice legs

One group after another, all ages, all races, from every corner of the globe, they gather here to

Galvanize, embolden, inspire this generation on to new paths

Build a better world

We think that capitalism cannot survive

A new concept

We are seeking a new world order

May I speak

Anyone here can speak

My name is Raul Chibas. I am from Cuba.

I...excuse me this is, speaking in public is not as easy for me, My brother, Eddy, is much better at this.

Go on, what have you got to say?

Our struggle in Cuba began in March of 1927 when president Machado extended his term and a constitutional amendment was made to accommodate him. Since that act against democratic principles, the students of La Habana University have been fighting this regime no matter the consequences. Many of us have had to flee. One of the leaders, Julio Antonio Mella, was hunted

down and killed in Mexico City by Machado's men. The artist Diego Rivera heard his last words, "I am murdered by Machado, I die for the revolutionary cause." My brother Eddy is also a leader in this fight. He speaks of our struggle with a clarity and passion I wish I possessed. As for me, I am here because I was arrested for distributing literature against the disappearance of my friends, I was taken to the Principe Fortress and was beaten. I was in prison one month. Many of my friends have disappeared without a trace. One of my brother's best companions, Angel Alvarez, was taken last January by the police. He helped me escape to this country. Angel was brutally tortured. We appealed to the American Ambassador to save his life. The Ambassador assured us that Angel's life would be protected. Angel was murdered that very day. But we will continue our struggle for true liberty. Thank you for hearing, for letting me speak

MARISSA Si, me acuerdo, I remember, me acuerdo his mad love affair with the Big Apple. It was this trip, it was bohemian New York that formed him, rooted him in the ideals that would last his lifetime,

Twenty five years after that day in Union Square; after the Machado regime; after the first Batista regime; after 11 years of a very flawed democracy; and during Batista's second dictatorship, an endless parade of corrupt or extremist leaders, then the 1957 manifesto written by Fidel Castro, Felipe Pasos, and my father Raul.

(We hear in voice over the following text from the 1957 manifesto.)

El 12 de Julio, 1957 de la Sierra Maestra Where the sense of duty has united us, we make this call to our compatriots. The time has come in which the nation can save itself from tyranny through the intelligence, courage and civic responsibility of its children. Our greatest weakness has been division and tyranny. To unite is the only patriotic act at this hour.

To unite in that which the political, revolutionary and social sectors that fight dictatorship have in common. And what do political parties of the opposition, revolutionary sectors and civic institutions have in common? The desire to put an end to a regime of coercion, to the violation of individual rights,

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to the infamous crimes, and to find peace for
 which we all yearn through the only means
 possible, which is the democratic and consti-
 tutional channeling of the country. Do we,
 rebels of the Sierra Maestra, not desire free
 elections, a democratic regime, a constitu-
 tional government? It is because we desire
 these more than anyone that we are here.

RAUL You know what you don't do. You don't
 start your final day thinking that it is your
 last. A long drive. A very long drive. It is
 August of 1957. I am Raul Chibas, for the
 moment at least. I am 41 years old. I am in
 a patrol car. My cousin Robertico is sit-
 ting beside me; and we are on a ride to our
 deaths. A month ago I co-wrote a manifesto
 for the Cuban revolution. Fidel recently
 gave me orders to leave the Sierra, where I
 had been fighting with him and other rebels,
 to go to the U.S. and to bring back weapons.
 In La Habana, while making arrangements
 to leave the country, I was captured by Bati-
 sta's police. One of them, Alfarro is driving
 this patrol car. I know Alfarro by reputa-
 tion. Many of my friends have died at the
 hands of this butcher, and now it is my turn.
 It is 3am. The streets are deserted. There is
 the only the monotonous hum of the patrol
 car and the sight of the headlights sweeping
 away the darkness ahead of it. The silence is
 broken every now and then by Alfarro or his
 goon turning around to tell Robertico and
 I how much they are going to enjoy killing
 us. They are really looking forward to it,
 they tell us. The plan is to take us to a lake
 on the outskirts of La Habana and shoot us
 in the head. Then they will load our bodies
 onto a plane and dump them over the Sierra
 to make it look as though we died there in
 combat and not here in the city at the hands
 of these assassins. My mind is passing over
 many thoughts and memories. How did I
 get here? I know I am a dead man. In a few
 moments time my life will be over. Strange.
 I believe in what I am dying for. Alfarro has
 pulled up to a gas station. He's making a
 phone call. He doesn't want to use the radio
 in the patrol car in case some sympathizer
 picks up the signal and tries to rescue us.
 He's come back. We keep driving. We are
 at the intersection for the road to the lake.
We turn in the opposite direction. Maybe
there's a chance. We pull up to the plaza in
front of the castle of Atarez, a place known

for its torture chambers. More police of-
 ficers. They taunt us, jeer at us, wave their
 guns in our faces. Alfarro and the other one
 get out of the car. A man lunges forward.
 My heart nearly stops. He says something
 incomprehensible, ludicrous to me. He asks
 me about Trucutú Longa. Now, Trucutú
 Longa is a football player who has no neck.
 He is named after a cartoon character who
 also has no neck. Why this man is asking
 me about Trucutú Longa with all the casu-
 alness in the world at a moment when I am
 about to be killed is so ridiculous so absurd
 to me. I don't even know Trucutú Longa!
 He moves away and a tall imposing man
 takes his place.

VOICE 'Do you know who I am?'

RAUL 'No.'

VOICE 'I am Ventura.'

RAUL He said this as though expecting the
 earth to shake.

VOICE 'You know that you are a dead man,
 don't you.'

RAUL 'Yes, I know.'

He pulls out his gun and points it towards
 my head. I cannot look away. I cannot
 breathe. Time has stopped. Suddenly some-
 thing comes over the radio of the patrol car.
 A strange combination of words, some kind
 of code. The police officers and Ventura all
 lean in. They break off and begin to yell and
 curse loudly and I think, if they are upset it
 must be good for me! It is not convenient to
 kill me tonight. Orders are to take me to the
 prison. They don't want another Martyr. I
 spend two weeks in there. Screams all day
 and night. The faces of my torturers. The
 sneakers I do my calisthenics in. Odd com-
 binations of memories and fears mixed in
 one nightmare. When I get out I am inter-
 viewed by the press. My captors make sure
 that my visible wounds have healed. I man-
 age to get out of the country, to the U.S.
 where I make the appropriate contacts and
 fly back with the newly purchased weapons
 on the first successful guerilla nighttime
 flight. Mission accomplished.

RAUL I will tell that story often and remind
 my daughter that without that radio signal,
 without the interception of that radio sig-
 nal I would have been killed and her birth
 would not have happened. I am erased from
 Cuban history. I am conspicuously left out of
 the list of rebel comandantes at the Museum

of the Revolution in La Habana. I have been airbrushed out of Cuban history.

(Video imagery of the Sierra, opening footage from "I am Cuba" mixed with Raul's photos and water. MARISSA floats with the images. She takes on the position in the cave with her arms outstretched. She peels away the green army jacket and by the end of the sequence leaves it downstage right.)

MARISSA Si, me acuerdo. I remember that I owe my existence to a radio signal. I remember a great divide. I remember being at a beach when I was a child, and playing with a little girl and when her mother asked me my name she took the little girl away while screaming obscenities at me. My mother later explained that there were those who hated my father for his involvement in the revolution. But I never understood exactly. Raul always said that he would fight the revolution all over again, although he was tragically disappointed in the outcome. Change was necessary. He often said that he had not traded one dictator to replace it with another. Si, me acuerdo, I remember. We're having a party!

MARISSA August 1969. I live with my Cuban American family at 90th Street and Columbus Ave. on the island of Manhattan. From our 20th story window I can see the GW building and the little globe on top of another building that tells the weather by a colored light. Red means rain, white snow, and green a clear day. We're having a party, and not just any party. My sister Dee Dee and I are extremely excited, we've been promised by my mother's friends, Anais and Elena a dance lesson. Our first real dance lesson. We want so much to learn those graceful moves these gorgeous red nailed women make. When they are not dancing they are telling sad stories and looking lost, but when they dance they look like goddesses. We want that. We want to look like goddesses.

I woke up to the smell of onions, garlic and lemon sautéing and Sergio Mendes and Brasil 66 playing in the background. Our guests are about to arrive. My father methodically pierces the olives with colored toothpicks. My mother, Dalia, is primping her large bouffant hairdo with the help of the mirror over the bar. They are drinking

whiskey sours and the fragrance perfumes the whole room. Peanuts and olives are laid out on the coffee table, the Spanish tiled bar, and the dining table. The buzzer from the lobby sounds. We wait for those first guests as they make their way to the elevator, up the twenty flights and to our front door.

Hola

Buenas Noches, como estan ustedes?

Dame tu abrigo

Mira la vista!

Ding dong

Buzz

Ya estan llegando todos

Soon the other guests arrive.

Al fin el trafico estan de madre

Ay que elegante

Un daiquiri por favor

Anais in a super duper mini hot pink skirt. She sits on a bar stool popping olives in her mouth, drink in hand and telling jokes. This bar stool is no match for my voluptuous nalgas, and I spill over on all sides. Elena enters in her trademark black tailored suit and see-through white silk blouse.

She puffs her cigarette, eyes slightly closed, Garbo style.

Scotch on the rocks por favor.

Dee Dee and I run around passing drinks and hors d'oeuvres in our matching skirts and go-go shirts, and are constantly hugged and pinched and praised.

The paella is ready

click clack click clack to the kitchen

The party divides into two factions

The living room – Bueno rrrrrroooooorooooo

The kitchen – Ayyyhheeeeayyy

Sangria

the sounds of people laughing and talking and needing to keep making sound.

Some of these guests have been in the U.S. for several years, some are recent Cuban immigrants, but all come with a thirst to experience something familiar, a reprieve from feeling like an alien.

(Benny Moré's "Santa Isabel" plays over one of the radios. During the following section MARISSA learns to dance to the music.)

ELENA Time for your first real dance lesson

She kicks the speaker

Benny More

Don't move

The first step is to listen

You aren't allowed to move until the rhythm creeps into your body. The way into the music is through the entire body. Keep the torso still and let that rhythm move through you until it reaches your nalgas of its own.

MARISSA My pelvis has a life of its own. Anais' moves are round and sensual. Her nalgas stir the room into a frenzy. Dee Dee takes on her style and is Anais' special pupil. I take after Elena. Her signature move is to call the music further in with a hand gesture. She also teaches me the thrill of the slight hesitation, to hold back just for a moment and then fling myself wildly back in the rhythm.

They clap and encourage us.

I see my father and mother dancing. My father barely moves but is always in rhythm. My mother has the moves. She shakes her hips and glances around the room to see who is watching her. **I witness something that I rarely see on their faces, joy. Oh yes,** I remember, it is the communal pleasure of living in these sounds that make our hearts and bodies swell with ecstasy. We know something about these sounds, we understand them, they are a deep secret within us, a kind of ancient language that we share.

A group of men in the midst of a heated discussion about Cuba begin to shout uncontrollably. The insults begin to fly and the dancing stops short. The yelling reaches its climax when one of the guests threatens to leave in a barrage of escalating screams. Elena's lone female voice pierces through all the others: "Oye! Stop it! We didn't come here to fight. Este exilio nos tiene locos. This exile is killing us! There's enough fighting between us. We came to laugh and dance and forget our problems for a few hours. So be quiet and let's dance!"

(A dance to send away the bad spirits. MARISSA takes on Dalia's persona. She begins as though speaking over the exuberance of the party. The text in bold is said in the voice of her Uncle Juan.)

DALIA Hola, I am Dalia Colominas. First runner up Miss Cuba of 1959. Everyone says I should have won. All the judges afterward told me, they said 'Dalia tu debias haver ganado'. The girl who won, her father is a famous poet and that's why they gave her the

crown and not me. I am so mad that I run up to my hotel room and refused to go to the party. Ay, I have this beautiful suite all to myself. With eight brothers and sisters I really appreciate having this room for the week.

Well, losing is disappointment. Then the judges come to my room and offer me the same prizes as the girl who won. That makes me feel better so I go down to the party. That's when I meet Raul Chibas, a comandante of the revolution. He is in his guerilla outfit, like all the rebels are doing. They have just won and come down from the mountains and everyone is feeling you know happy and optimistic. There are celebrations all night in the street and Raul and Camillo Cienfuegos have both come to the pageant party. Camillo is handsome, he is very handsome. You know like Gary Cooper handsome. He is a pilot with the 26th of July movement. He will die a year later in a plane crash. A lot of people will think that Castro had him killed because he was so handsome and charismatic and could be a competition. I don't know. They are, Raul and Camillo, are both at the pageant party and I see that all the girls are around Camillo so I go and talk to Raul. He isn't as good looking but he is very charismatic and intelligent... His brother, Eddy Chibas, was a famous politician who had his own weekly radio program. I remember hearing that show. Everyone did. It was on Sundays at 8pm and you could walk down any street in Cuba and hear Eddy Chibas's voice because everyone tuned in. He was very popular, especially for those who had nothing to lose. He would denounce corrupt government officials to expose the graft, you know, the stealing that was going on. One day an informant told Eddy about someone in the government who was stealing money from the treasury. The informant promised him proof for the following week. Eddy made the denouncement on his radio program and said that he would present the proof on his next show. But the informant took off, mysteriously, and was nowhere to be found. And so Eddy lost credibility. They made fun of him in the newspapers. He was still the front runner for the presidency...but then one Sunday, on his radio show, Eddy

made an impassioned speech and at the end shot himself, committed suicide.

No one knew what happened to this informant, some doubted there ever was one, others thought Eddy was set up. Yo no se. He was a lost hope... Of course this was all when I was very young, just a child really. Raul is 17 years older than I am. Raul looks so distinguished in the outfit of a comandante. He has traveled so much and I love hearing about the Châteaux of the Loire and Mont Saint-Michel and New York. I love hearing about architecture of other cities. I want to study architecture but here in Cuba, at this time, it isn't something a woman can study. Raul knows so much about these things I dream about. He is on top of the world; his life dream has been won. Cuba es libre.

One of my pageant prizes was a trip to N.Y. This is my first time here and I want to do and see all I can. Raul decides to follow me here and I don't tell him not to. But he is so mad because my mother made me bring my brother Juan as a chaperone. So, everywhere Raul and I go in N.Y; the Metropolitan Museum, Carnegie Hall, walking down Fifth Ave., Juan is right between us! Ay, Raul is so mad. And, my brother Juan, bueno somos de Matanza and he is very loud and not shy! My mother gave him strict orders and he is following them like a good soldier.

Don't get so close to my sister!

Or he see's something that excites him, like Rockefeller Center **Mira Nanny! Estamos en Rockefeller Center! Vamos al Show!** and everyone in the streets turns around to look at us. Raul is one of the shyest people - not the shyest... he is spending the whole trip chasing me, embarrassed, and frustrated. For me this trip is... a beginning. I am seeing a life I never knew was possible. It is better than the movies. And the women are so elegant and free and... cosmopolitan! When we get back to Cuba Raul still pursues me. One day I get a phone call from Raul to go down to his office. As soon as I walk in someone bolts the door behind me. I look around the room and there is Raul smiling devilishly. Standing next to him is a man. Raul introduces the man as a justice of the peace. Then he says, well, come on, this is the time. We're getting married. Yes, of course I was in a little shock, I mean... this is a little strange don't you think? A surprise

wedding, a surprise for the bride! But that's how he is. When he makes a decision... that is it. Raul and I will leave Cuba in August of 1960 for what we think will be a short time. I will hear of my mother's death by telephone and be unable to go to her funeral. I will raise two daughters. I will be married 17 years then divorce. I will declare myself a cosmopolitan woman and fight for my freedom. On my last days I will tell my daughter Marissa, I love you...put on some lipstick.

(MARISSA has taken off the scarf and placed it downstage center.)

MARISSA Si me acuerdo. I remember my mother's beauty, love of glamour, and fighting spirit. I remember seeing Raul as a man between worlds; not a communist nor a capitalist, not happy nor sad, neither a man of faith nor an atheist. After the revolution, when it became clear the direction the country was headed in, and key positions were being given to the communist faction of the coalition of fighters that won the revolution, Raul has an audience with Castro. In this meeting he speaks his mind and insists that Fidel acknowledge the manifesto and the democratic principles outlined in that document. Castro listens, says little. Raul leaves the meeting knowing his days are numbered and prison or worse is a certainty. He flees under cover of night in a seventeen-foot catamaran and lands in the Florida Keys. *(MARISSA jumps off stage.)* Raul will never see Cuba again. Did I inherit his inability to land, his need for flight, his tortured soul? Where did that begin? Was it the loss of his beloved brother, was it losing Eddy that broke his heart? Did I break his heart, am I like Eddy? Did I inherit my uncles...? Oh no. Si me acu-. Can we stop this-? Can we stop this now?

(Harsh sounds. Video of whirlpool type imagery, storms, crashing waves etc. MARISSA comes back to downstage left corner of stage and waves handkerchief behind her.)

MARISSA The clock pulses bright red - 4 am. I've been tossing and turning for at least two hours. The shadows in the room are eerie and unsettling. I move slowly towards the bathroom and my eyes focus on what at first seems to be an apparition. On the roof of the building in front me

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of the building in front me

is a figure, a man in a white suit franti-
cally waving and shouting something.
He's frantically waving at me. He is ter-
rifying. The man in the white suit stomps
the ground of the roof. Oh my god, I'm
not imagining this, am I? I feel totally na-
ked and then realize that, yes; in fact I am
totally naked. I move away from the win-
dow. My heart is pounding wildly. I begin
to think how much the man on the roof
oddly resembles my Cuban uncle Eddy
who has been dead for over thirty years
and who I only know from photos but
yes it sure does look like him. Odd. How
is this possible? I look again on the roof.
Where is he? But I saw him? He couldn't
have disappeared? I saw him! Where is he?
Where is he? *(Confusion and then light bulb!)*
Duh! I have to go there!

I need to go there, to Cuba. I need to re-
claim, to seek what was lost to find mean-
ing to restore something to find out about
my families' history in Cuba that I know
absolutely nothing about to have fun to be
exotic to feel at home somewhere to go to
Mecca to hear those cadences and rhythms
to get some information to go to the places
I've been hearing about all my life to have
the molecules in my body stirred and shaken
to delve into dangerous territory to say oh
yeah I've been to Cuba to not feel like an
idiot when asked "why haven't you ever
gone there?" To prove something to see my
family there to know more about my uncle
Eddy to record the old timers still in Cuba
before it's too late to find out if I really have
anything at all to do with that place to have
a pilgrimage.

(MARISSA holds the speaker.)

La Habana, 1993.

Pouring rain. This is the height of what is
now called the "special period". The Soviets
are now the Russians and aid from that lost
empire has been cut off abruptly. Blackouts
and food shortages are part of the countries
daily life.

Neither Raul nor Dalia wanted me to come
here. But I had to. I am the first of my fam-
ily to go back and on this tempestuous day
in August I am going back to a place I have
never been.

Santo Suarez, Cuba

A large run down colonial house.

I meet my Tia Amelia and her family, my
family. I am treated like royalty as they of-
fer me the best of the little they have. I take
out the gifts I have brought them; they laugh
and joke as I tell them about the antics of
their U.S. family. Tia Delia still stops fam-
ily gatherings with her "visions," Tio Juan
still works as a janitor in the same NY office
building he has been cleaning for the past 30
years and still refuses to get a telephone so
his sisters won't bother him and Dalia is still
a wild social butterfly. They are wrapped in
my stories of Yuma, that's what they call an-
ything new, cool, or from the U.S. Eso es
Yuma!

My Tia Amelia glows with wisdom and
resignation. They all make light of the dif-
ficulty of their situation and proudly share
the results of their clever resourcefulness -
homemade paint, jerry rigged back up
power for the outages, recycled skate boards
made out of old roller skates and blocks of
wood.

I take my Cuban family to a Paladar, a clan-
destine restaurant in a private home. I see
my young cousins eat cheese for the first
time. I see my families faces light up when
the Paella arrives. I feel a weight descend on
us at the end of the meal.

I am beginning to understand the code that
Cubans speak with, the glances and mime
used to avoid being overheard saying some-
thing counter revolutionary. No one can af-
ford to speak freely here. It is an atmosphere
that makes my rebellious spirit want to shout
in the streets. But I don't.

The National Archives La Habana. I hold in
my hand photograph after sepia toned pho-
tograph of people I do not recognize and
whose stories are a mystery to me. These
strangers are my family - a lost world. They
are deteriorating in my hands. They look
out at me with a fixed gaze, peer into my
soul. If only my father were here to tell me
who these people are and to release me from
their haunting eyes. Do any of their features
remind me of particular living family mem-
bers? Are those my sister Dee Dee's eyes?
Gloria's glance? Raul's air? The back of the
pictures offer no help, no mention of when
the photographs were taken or where.

The damp musty scent of decay

My back aches

Muscles tighten

I cannot breathe

My head swims, spins, is pounded on
I look for an opening
Arms stretch towards the wooden chair in
front of me
Darkness

(The sound of a crackly radio.)

MARISSA I meet my father's cousin Arturin. He is living in a dilapidated apartment that has been devastated by a flood. You can see the mark about halfway up the wall where the water reached. There are three pictures on the wall. One of Arturin's mother, one of his father, and one of Uncle Eddy. Each has the mark of the flood running across them. Arturin's apartment is filled with old radios. The hallway leading to his living room is lined on either side with stacked, old, broken radios. Arturin tries to fix them. He keeps them whether they work or not.

Arturin was my Uncle Eddy's typist. He typed nearly every speech that Eddy made.

ARTURIN Yo trabajé con Eddy, algunas veces hasta las 2 de la mañana!

MARISSA You were a part of history, parte de la historia Cubana.

ARTURIN Si. Todavía hace Raul su calisthenics?
MARISSA Si, Raul still does his calisthenics.

ARTURIN Muy bien, muy bien. Yo también.
A mi me robaron el otro día. Unos jóvenes. Estaba caminando después de ver a mi espiritualista. Me golpearon, me quitaron todo! Lo poco que tengo.

MARISSA How awful that such a kind and gentle man was robbed and beaten. Lo siento mucho.

ARTURIN Ven. Ven.

MARISSA Arturin takes me down his small corridor and into the kitchen. There are radios stacked here too. From behind an old wooden wall clock he pulls out a small tattered cardboard box. Pieces of cardboard crumble to the ground.

Arturin lifts out a small pin with Eddy's image from his presidential campaign, then a yellowed handkerchief with Eddy's initials, finally some audio tapes with large green lumpy mounds of mold on them... and one clean one.

(Wagner music.)

MARISSA reveals Eddy's glasses.

Eddy footage. MARISSA places Eddy's glasses on her head.

This text is heard first with Eddy Chibas's voice from the original recording in Spanish. That recording plays under the section above. MARISSA first begins as if translating and eventually becomes Eddy Chibas.)

EDDY Five centuries ago the Tribunal of the Inquisition cried at Galileo, "Liar and deceiver! Present proof that the earth moves around the sun!" Galileo could not present the physical proof of the obvious fact and was condemned, but kept repeating, firm in his moral conviction, "But it moves! But it moves!"

Five years ago I accused the Minister of Education of stealing the monies for school materials and breakfasts and of fomenting in Miami an empire of real estate. The minister and all his leaders stormed in crying, "Liar! Slanderer! Present the proof!" I could not present the physical proof that they were stealing the money from the National Treasury, but I kept repeating, firm in my moral conviction, "They are stealing it! They are stealing it!"

Last Sunday, from this same tribunal of orientation and combat, I presented to the people irrefutable proof of the enormous corruption of the current regime: photographs of schools and hospitals in misery contrasted with the ostentatious palaces of governors that not long ago lived in poverty. My words of this past Sunday did not have the resonance required by the grave situation. Cuba must awaken, but my knocking was not, perhaps sufficiently strong. We will continue to call upon the conscience of the Cuban people.

Cuba has a great destiny reserved in history, but she should achieve it. Cuba has seen her historical destiny frustrated until now by the corruption and blindness of her governors whose thoughts have always soared at ground level.

The only governing body capable of saving Cuba is that of the Party of the Cuban People, Ortodoxos!

Forward fellow Ortodoxos! For economic independence, political liberty and social justice! Let us sweep away the thieves of government! Ethics over greed! People of

MARISSA places Eddy's glasses

first with Eddy Chibas's voice recording in Spanish. That repeats the section above. MARISSA translating and eventually becomes

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Cuba arise and go forth! People of Cuba awaken! This is the final pounding on your door!

(MARISSA reaches her arm upwards and brings it down hitting her stomach as a gunshot is heard.)

EDDY I died on August 16th, 1951 shortly before my 44th birthday. My party, the Ortodoxos will never again have prominence. I will be a figure claimed by both Cuban exiles as well as those in Cuba. My suicide will create a political vacuum that will allow the dictator Batista to impose a successful military coup and the election of 1952 will never take place. It will be the end of democratic elections in Cuba. At the one-year anniversary of the triumph of the revolution, Fidel Castro will give a speech at my grave and state that the revolution began with Eduardo Chibas.

(Below the text in bold is MARISSA as an older RAUL.)

MARISSA Me acuerdo, I remember being haunted by the overwhelming presence of this man, this uncle, this legend whose tragic suicide hovered over our family. Eddy's photograph, which hung in whatever hallway or closet served as my father's office, lunged towards me defiantly. I knew I could never repair the depth of that loss. As a young adult I tried to get as far away from Cuba and the longing for that lost world as I could.

Me acuerdo, I remember one crisp fall day when I was in college trying to muster the courage to tell Raul that I'd found faith. I was raised on "religion is the opiate of the masses." Raul himself had been an altar boy and that experience turned him off to religion forever. I found a quiet place of peace and comfort with the Quakers.

Que? Los Quakers? Que es eso?

They believe that there is that of God in everyone.

Bah! Fanatics!

Well no, or else you would have heard of them.

How can there be a God that allows so much suffering that tolerates hunger?— This is the worst thing you could have done to me.

(Breath)

(Video image of Raul. Each line indicates a different voice in the hospital room.)

MARISSA Me acuerdo un hospital. I remember my father's hospital room. He is dying.

(Breath)

Many voices

Clicking heels along a long corridor

Que te dijo el doctor

The sound of a baby whining

Take him into the garden downstairs

Claro que esta aburrido aqui

Who put on this CD?

That it's soon and...

(Breath)

Did she bring more straws? He looks thirsty.

...y que— it's something like drowning, which...

So, this guy Papi knew from the Sierra is coming up now. I don't know him but he said he fought with Papi and insisted on coming up...

(Breath)

The phone rings

Hello, oh hi...Yes...thank you

Everything ok?

Yes, but...

We need more straws

OK, I'll get them

Por favor Capitan Ochoa, entra

CAPITAN Permiso

(Pause)

Mira Raul

(Pause)

I was in the Sierra with your father. We fought together. I was in prison after the revolution, like so many who dared question. They kept me in a ditch, that's how I lost my sight, I was there 27 years.

(CAPITAN begins to move the speaker diagonally downstage right.)

Te acuerdas Raul — Do you remember the Sierra? Do you remember when you first arrived there and immediately the planes came overhead and began shooting? You took cover at a nearby Campo. Remember the large trees that embraced and sheltered you. You moved on when you thought it was safe and scaled the side of a mountain where you met up with Fidel and the rest of us. More planes attacked, B26's began to fire. As soon

as they stopped we all talked enthusiastically and optimistically about the future. Remember how after each attack we felt renewed by having survived, and when our compañeros fell, our souls swelled with the need to continue and fight?

And when we marched into San Lorenzo y Los Lajiales where we saw the grove named, Mango de las Mujeres, for the women hung and burned alive from those trees while fighting for independence from Spain. Everywhere we marched and hid from fire held out our history to us with outstretched arms. The ghosts whispered through the hot humid air of the righteousness of our cause. We were not afraid. We were among those that live in no time, that trail eternally along the mango groves and sing of...revolution. Te acuerdas how in the midst of the destruction and devastation we felt unparalleled hope for the future? How we were fueled by the campesinos who greeted us warmly and fed us and joined us, and how the stories of the heroes in the city filled us with strength and pride.

Do you remember the overwhelming feeling of the Nation, those in the cities and those of us fighting in the mountains, rising up as one voice to crush the dictatorship that had oppressed us for so long?

I remember how much you believed that there was a better way, a way that rejected the notion of the necessity of poverty and ignorance. That rejected disproportionate wealth.

(He stomps the ground and gestures upwards.)

I remember you Raul. I remember. Me acuerdo!

Now untie yourself from the pier and behold, Axe!

I remember you. Me acuerdo!

Todos vuelven a la tierra en que nacieron

Al embrujo incomparable de su sol

Todos vuelven al rincón donde vivieron

Donde acaso floreció más de un amor.

Axe! Ningun Cubano deber morir afuera de Cuba. Axe! Yo lo veo, lo veo allí! Lo veo en Cuba! Axe! Axe! Axe!

MARISSA What was that? Who was that guy? Papi? He's gone, he's gone.

(MARISSA slowly takes off the white shirt during this next sequence.)

Bajo el árbol solitario de el pasado
cuantas veces nos ponemos a sonar
todos vuelven para la ruta de el recuerdo
pero el tiempo de el amor no vuelve mas
Beneath the solitary tree of the past
How often do we find ourselves dreaming
We all return by memories road
que santo el amor de la tierra
que triste la ausencia que deja el ayer
How sacred is the love of the earth
How sad the loss of yesterday
que santo el amor de la tierra...

(MARISSA sets the shirt down center and in the next sequence collects Eddy's glasses and handkerchief, then Raul's jacket.)

MARISSA Before leaving La Habana I stop at a tourist shop and buy 12 medallions representing the Orishas. At that time I knew nothing about the Orishas, only know that they are the West African gods whose stories were carried to Cuba by the slaves brought there. Each African God has a Catholic Saint as a counterpart. I decide to wear this medallion with the name Ochun carved on the back, this one who wears a cascade of yellow flowers. The others I give away to my friends. When I return home I ask my mother who Ochun is. She tells me that her Catholic counterpart is La Caridad del Cobre, the patron saint of Cuba. How interesting. Of all 12 medallions I pick her. Is she known for anything in particular? Oh, yes... she saves people from drowning.

(MARISSA sets down Dalia's scarf with the other things. She has made an altar on the speaker with the clothing items she has taken off during the course of the play. She is wearing a bright colored no sleeved shirt.)

The Cave. As tempting as it is to stay here, I choose to call out for help. My guide, Stanley, reaches me in time and pulls me out of the water. *(She coughs, finds her breath.)* I feel the damp earth beneath me and am grateful – so grateful to be here.

Yo me acuerdo. No me puedo olvidar. Soy a hija de Raul y Dalia.

I am the daughter who sprang from the thoughts of Eddy Chibas.

I am the daughter of ocean breezes, and the New York IRT subway, of croquetas and hamburgers, of Celia Cruz and Duke Ellington.

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 para la ruta de el recuerdo
 o de el amor no vuelve mas
 solitary tree of the past
 o we find ourselves dreaming
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I am the daughter whose deep roots travel far
 beyond homeland and geographical borders.
 I am the daughter of miles de valseros, thou-
 sands of Cubans who have drowned trying
 to make their way to Yuma.
 I am the daughter of those who question the
 time when democracy and capitalism be-
 came inextricably bound.

I am the daughter of those in Cuban prisons
 who dared demand their human rights.
 I am the daughter of those Latino's in the
 U.S. currently being terrorized.
 I am the daughter of those who seek justice
 and liberty wherever that may be.
 Soy hija de un revolucionario Cubano
 I am the daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary