

cuba
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**WHAT'S ON
HAVANA**

**APR
2015**

**Habana Vieja:
Ciudad en Movimiento**

(April 15-19, 2015)



The XVII Festival de la Huella de Espana

(April 12-19, 2015)

The Havana Queens Party

An army of little girls in long skirts

LET'S DANCE





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Photo by Gabriel Davalos for Havana Queens Party

EDITORIAL

Cover picture from the 2014 Habana Vieja: Ciudad en Movimiento by Alex Mene

Welcome to our April issue of What's On Havana, Let's Dance. Cuban dancers are legendary worldwide for their irrepressible movement, rhythm, style and energy. It is an irony of this at times macho country that boys and ballet is not an oxymoron but a staple diet which has produced not just the world famous Carlos Acosta but a smorgasbord of talent from salsa to Spanish dance, rumba to flamenco, modern dance to classical ballet. The brilliant Havana Queens take a little from everything and succeed spectacularly in putting on a fabulous show.

This issue puts front and center the XX Festival Internacional de Danza en Paisajes Urbanos or simply Habana Vieja: Ciudad en Movimiento, which takes place in Old Havana from April 15-19, 2015. This event, organized by the dynamic Isabel Bustos and headquartered from Retazos's theatre in Old Havana, brings the streets of Old Havana alive with countless groups and performances from both Cuba and around the world. This festival overlaps with the Festival de la Huella de España, which is an opportunity to see Cuba's army of little girls in long skirts, perform Spanish dancing with aplomb.

We have also included features on Miguel Iglesias, director of Cuba's best modern dance group, Danza Contemporánea de Cuba; the primadonna without equal, Alicia Alonso; Conjunto Folclórico Nacional de Cuba (Afro-Cuban dance); and the flamenco group, Ecos. If you are still with us after this whirlwind through Cuban dance, you may now see why Come Dancing would be redundant in Cuba—put quite simply, Cuba is already dancing!

Elsewhere we have four additional features starting with the Dead Daises who brought Australian rock to Benny More's old stomping ground at Salón Rosado de la Tropical, an interview with filmmaker Tomás Gutiérrez Alea by Lorenzo DeStefano, and the up-and-coming music sensation Laritza Bacallao. Finally, if tats are your thing, you can get inked up at La Marca—Havana's first fully dedicated tattoo parlor.

March 2015 Highlights (Havana, unless stated)

- * **April 2-5** Festival Pina Colada (Ciego de Avila)
- * **April 8-12** Jornada Nacional de Teatro Callejero (Matanzas)
- * **April 12-19:** XVII Festival de la Huella de España
- * **April 15-19:** Habana Vieja: Ciudad en Movimiento
- * **April 15-26:** X Festival Internacional de Videodanza DV Tránsitos Habana

Thanks to all of our contributors, sponsors, partners and readers. Do please keep providing us with your feedback, comments and suggestions. All enquiries should be directed to Sophia Beckman at CubaAbsolutely@gmail.com. All the best. Viva Cuba!



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Havana *QUEENS* Party

by Margaret Atkins



The Paseo del Prado marks the southern limits of Old Havana. Its wide pedestrian strip with trees and benches is guarded by eight lions cast from the bronze of old cannons that at one time were part of the colonial city's defense system. In the afternoons, it is a place for rendezvous, for children playing, for lovers, roller-skaters and skateboarders, for an arts and crafts market and for oldsters looking for a cool breeze and conversation. At night, on the corner of Virtudes, you can look up at the second floor of number 309 and you will see two windows whose glass changes colors from red to green to purple: it's the frenetic Havana Queens party.

The building is the site of the Centro Asturiano, one of the regional Spanish associations that in the early 20th century provided charitable assistance to the numerous emigrants from Spain residing on the Island. There is a grand reception area on the ground floor with splendid mirrors, photos of the association's founders and an image of Our Lady of Covadonga. There is also an Italian restaurant. The third floor has a restaurant serving grilled foods. Right in the middle, on the second floor is the Havana Gourmet Restaurant. We've arrived early and it's almost empty. People start getting there around 9 o'clock so as not to miss a second of the show and to take advantage of the deal which



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includes a tapas table or gala dinner and, after the show, recorded music to dance the night away.

We're introduced to Rosario García, choreographer and director of the dance company that makes some 20 music videos every year and has won the important Premio Lucas (something like the MTV awards) in the category of best choreography three years running. Rosario is charming, elegant and high spirited. She was a dancer and choreographer of the prestigious Cuban Television Ballet until she founded her own company called Havana Queens. "Queens" came from the fact that at the beginning the group's members were all female; nowadays it has grown into a heterogeneous show taking in the most sabroso Cuban rhythms, guajira music, pop, hip hop, disco and nueva trova.

I talk with the dancers in the improvised dressing rooms overflowing with colorful costumes and mirrors. The troupe comes from different backgrounds—from contemporary and folklore dance school graduates to street performers ready to show off the acrobatics they learned in city parks. Some of the girls, like Rosario, are from the TV ballet company. I see a gorgeous mulatto doing some unbelievable stretches and a short-haired girl runs in, just in time to get ready. When we see her on stage later on we are entranced by her expressiveness that sets her apart from the others.

The show starts at 9:30 and it's organized into segments that alternate with the voice of Yuliet Abreu, known by Cubans as "La Papina." She's the daughter of one of the members of the legendary vocal and percussion group Los Papines to which she also belongs. Number follows number onstage and the audience is getting excited with the frenetic hip movements of the dancers. There is one contemporary dance number that could favorably compete with anything being presented in any great theater in the world. There is break-dancing and clog dancing (an odd feature of this is that the girls wear the clogs on their hands, not on their feet!) in syncopated rhythm. The audience is really warming up to these rhythms, it doesn't matter which part of the world they are from. The show ebbs and flows, something like the universe until we believe that it is the universe itself; nothing exists beyond this room, this euphoria, this strength and the dedication of such tireless bodies. The choreography is impeccable, daring and, at times, challenging. The dancers are enjoying every moment and the audience bursts into applause and cries out. And when you think the show is over, it isn't, because the artists stay and go on dancing just for the love of dancing and so a whole other show is created, a spontaneous show that is new every single night, unique.



[CONTINUE TO READ FULL ARTICLE + SLIDESHOW](#)

When we are leaving, the lights are still on in the second floor windows. Everything will begin anew tomorrow. Maybe you too will get to enjoy these queens and their kings who light up the Havana nights under Rosario's steady, loving hand. Prado No. 309 is the address for rapture. It's the Havana Queens Party.



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Isabel Bustos: Havana dances with Retazos

by Margaret Atkins

Whoever visits Old Havana's Historical Centre in April will find a surprising sight: the old city dances. Plazas, parks, streets, museums and old rambling houses seem to be possessed by the spirit of dance, which invoked by dancer and choreographer Isabel Bustos and her company Retazos—Bits and Pieces—turns balconies, windows, stairs and centenary walls into stages.

To learn about the origins of this already traditional celebration, we headed for the modern company's base in the renovated stretch of Amargura Street between Mercaderes and San Ignacio, where in the little time left over from rehearsals and the thousand details that she insists on attending to personally, we were received by Isabel Bustos, a woman who transmits energy through the light of her eyes and the sweep of her hands.

The International Dance Festival in Urban Landscapes: Old Havana, City in Motion, was first held in 1996. Prevailing over all scepticism, the festival has been held twelve times already, and what began in two or three museums in the Historical Centre has expanded to almost every institution of the Historian's Office, to its main plazas and streets, with the presence of hundreds of guests both from Cuba and abroad. Since 1998, it forms part of the International City Dance Network, whose purpose is to link the choreography with the city's architecture.



Photo by Yadira Montero

Chilean-born Isabel, undisputed promoter of this “beautiful madness”, as some critics have called it, first began her love affair with the world of dance in a ballet school in Ecuador, where she spent her childhood, and later in the National School of Arts (ENA) in Cuba where her parents travelled as diplomats.

I studied ballet at the ENA taking lessons from great masters, including Loipa Araújo and Mirta Pla, two of the “Jewels” of Cuban ballet. Afterwards, I joined Danza Nacional de Cuba, directed then by Cuban choreographer Ramiro Guerra, where I had the chance to dance in some of his works.

After visits to Quito and Mexico City with temporary stays in Havana, she was granted a scholarship by UNESCO to study choreography in Paris which would serve, above all, to reassert her Latin American identity and the need to interconnect the arts to express emotions and feelings beyond technical virtuosity. From Paris she returned to Havana for good, captured by the magic of its lights, its colours, its people, and went on to create Retazos, based at first in the living room of her own home, modelling throughout the years an aesthetics that sets her group apart from other dance companies in the Island.

Our lives are made up of bits and pieces (retazos): pieces of other lives, feelings, emotions, thoughts, dreams... We are barely fragments of a whole, hence the name of our company founded in 1987 with five dancers. At first, we danced wherever we could—the foyer or ninth floor of the National Theatre, Teatro

Estudio, Miramar Theatre, Patio de Maria—under the principles that guided our work then and still today reign over all our actions which, thanks to the exceptional sensitivity of the City Historian, Eusebio Leal, are not confined solely to our Amargura headquarters: they stretch out to hospitals, schools, workplaces, our workshops with the children of the community, and, of course, the wonderful streets of Old Havana.

The work carried out by Retazos these last 20 years has been supported by two main pillars: the sublimation of emotions, of the subconscious, through a technique that is formed by theatrical elements as dance-theatre and contributions by creators such as Stanislavski, Barba, and others, serving the purpose of expressing and communicating the universal sufferings and dreams of people through the poetic values of the art of dancing; and the interrelation with other arts: visual arts, music, cinema or literature, making the Retazos headquarters a creative workshop.

Working with musicians, sculptors, painters, video and filmmakers is a way of incorporating their own poetry to ours, of putting together our bits and pieces. Architecture also motivates us. Making up a story for a balcony, giving in to the suggestions or to the visual and emotional values of an old wall, of an arch; vibrating in harmony with passers-by...is an improvisational exercise that fuels our creation and, at the same time, enriches the audiences’ spiritual and intellectual world.

[CONTINUE TO READ FULL ARTICLE + SLIDESHOW](#)



Photo by Alex Mene



Habana Vieja: Ciudad en Movimiento

*April 15-19
Old Havana*

Every April, visitors to Old Havana's historical Centre will find squares, parks, streets, museums and old houses possessed by a dancing spirit, which invoked by dancer and choreographer Isabel Bustos and her company Retazos, turns balconies, windows, stairs and walls into stages, for the International Dance Festival in Urban Landscapes: Old Havana City in Motion. The event which first took place in 1998 forms part of the International City Dance Network established in Barcelona, and began in the words of Isabel Bustos with "five or six people who ran from house to house, from balcony to balcony, from courtyard to courtyard, from garden to garden, two dancers here, two there." Today, Old Havana's plazas and streets fill with over 1,500 participants that include dancers, choreographers, musicians and painters.

The premise behind the International Dance Festival in Urban Landscapes is to draw inspiration from the city's architecture, to awaken the imagination, to promote new creative environments and to encourage the exchange of ideas and artistic experiences between the people of different languages and cultures.

Aiming to link dance choreography with the visual and expressive nature of the old city, as well as seeking to interact with passers-by, the event. A daring perpendicular stairway or the repetitious cadence of a fountain represents an opportunity for expression.

The festival will open at 9pm, April 15, at Plaza de Armas with *Crisálida* by Danza-Teatro Retazos. Mornings have been set aside for lectures and workshops; afternoons for lectures classes, passacaglias and shows; evenings for shows at Casa Guayasamín (7pm.), Casa de África (8pm) and Las Carolinas Theater (9pm). The closing show will be held at 9pm, on Plaza de Armas.



X Festival Internacional de Videodanza DV Danza Habana Movimiento y Ciudad

April 13-19
Old Havana

The diversity of proposals, genres and experiences that link audiovisual materials and dance is the focus of this festival, which is jointly sponsored by the City Historian's Office and Danza Teatro Retazos. With the participation of the Embassy of Norway, the Brownstone Foundation and D&T Proyecciones. The festival includes a workshop on performance and video art, lectures, exhibitions and videodance.

Program

Sala Noemí, Centro de Danza

APRIL 13-15 9 am-12:30 pm	Workshop "City in Motion. Video art and performance from corporeality" by Alicia de la Torre-Alice's Gold (Colombia)
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Sala Noemí, Centro de Danza

APRIL 13-14 2 pm	"Démontage". Talks on video-making by Luis Ernesto Doñas
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Streets / Sala Las Carolinas / Sala de la Diversidad

APRIL 15 4 pm	Inauguration Parade / TV Screen. Movement and City / Siéntelo en tu Piel
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Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales

APRIL 15 5 pm	Official opening of the Festival. Exhibition Burdsall-Izquierdo. Continuo Espacio-Tiempo, by Adolfo Izquierdo, on the work of legendary American dancer Lorna Burdsall and her project "Así Somos. Presentation of the videodance-instalalation Continuo Espacio-Tiempo. Prizewinning ceremony of TECNOLOGIASQUEDANZAN 2014.
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Streets

APRIL 16	Public action in the community.
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Centro de Desarrollo de las Artes Visuales

APRIL 16-18, 10AM-4PM; APRIL 19, 10AM-12M	National and international videodance shows. Presentation of documentaries and special performances
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Fábrica de Arte Cubano

APRIL 16-19	Screenings of a selection of DVDanza Habana 2015.
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X Festival Internacional de Videodanza DV Tránsitos Habana

April 15-26

Tránsitos Habana is part of the project “Retazos evolves for artistic creation, exchange and sociocultural transformation” funded by the European Union. The exchange between Scandinavian and Cuban artists includes choreographies, exhibitions, concerts and workshops aimed at the training and enrichment of the artistic and technical work of professional dancers, and training in the use of technological resources.

Program

Fábrica de Arte Cubano

APRIL 16-17	Screening of videos and DJ Pether y Lindgren (Sweden)
APRIL 18-19	Concerts with Lisa Nordstrom(Sweden)
APRIL 25-26	Children’s theater Big Wind (Sweden) / Installation-performance by Heine Avdal and her group Fieldworks of Distant Voices

Danza Teatro Retazos

APRIL 24-26	Presentation of Crisálida, a co-production between Memory Wax (Sweden) and Danza Teatro Retazos Retazos (Cuba) Theatre companies
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An Army of Little Girls in long skirts

by Margaret Atkins

For a long time, before those Walt Disney characters burst into the repertoire of Cuban children, the most popular costumes at kids' parties were gypsies for the girls and little Gallegos for boys. It's easy to understand that the *mestizo* nature of the Cuban nation right from its origins would hold onto so many cultural vestiges from Spain. Centuries of Spanish colonialism, descendants of the Spanish and Creoles born on the Island but raised listening to the memories of their parents. Immigrants from the provinces of Galicia and Asturias, from Valencia, the Canary Islands and Aragon...all these groups made their imprints on the formation of Cuba. Many of them would get together in their mutual assistance societies that today still conserve the traditions and folklore of their different regions. "I have two countries: Cuba and Spain", would be recited by a little dancer at one of the shows that would be put on, in little theatres and in the large halls of Havana where the society dance groups would perform.

In the afternoons, after school, an army of little girls in long skirts, their hair pulled back in a tight bun and adorned with a flower, march to their Spanish dancing lessons. Fans and combs,

castanets and high-heeled shoes are the key ingredients. Schools sprout everywhere and are open to all without the rigorous selection criteria of the famed Cuban dance academies. Little girls can make their dreams come true, for a day at least, in shows even if their future paths will be distant from the world of dance. And in those future days these dance teachers and their classes will be fondly remembered along with the magic



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of the stage complete with makeup and colorful costumes. Ah yes, and the intoxication of applause. I have watched little white, black and mulatto girls from all levels of Cuban society in the same group as little girls with Downs Syndrome and difficult teenagers.

The salon where mothers await the end of class becomes a meeting place for friends. Sometimes a father appears, clumsily combing out his daughter's hair. Talk turns to dresses and dance shoes, sewing and choreographies in preparation for the shows. Dance school involves everyone; it creates bonds and multiplies efforts. Many of the teachers have been trained by the same schools where they now teach. Some schools manage to send instructors to Spain to perfect their techniques. The preferred dances are those called "Classical": Galician and flamenco, but there are also folklore groups concentrating on dances from Aragon, Valencia, the Canary Islands and others. The need for music to accompany the dancing has motivated the teaching of instrumentalists and we see guitars, tambourines, *cajas* and bagpipes at

the salons, often acquired with much sacrifice and sometimes through the help of generous donors from Spain.

My daughters dance in one of the many Spanish Societies of Havana. They are part of that army of little girls: long skirts and flowers in their hair. As they are growing up, I think I shall look back with nostalgia to those days of heels tapping on the floor. I am comforted by the thought that these schools are still around, still growing strong. And even if my girls don't continue on stage as adults, I'll be able to hear the rhythm of castanets again in my home when my grand-daughters take Spanish dancing lessons.

CONTINUE TO READ FULL ARTICLE + SLIDESHOW



María del Pilar Rubí is a freelance photographer (www.pilarrubi.com) who works closely with the subjects of her pictures thus creating an atmosphere of trust.



XXVII Festival La Huella de España

April 12-19
Havana

Founded in 1989 by Cuba's prima ballerina, Alicia Alonso, the Spanish Imprint Festival is a reminder of the strong Spanish component in Cuban culture and idiosyncrasy. It is a festivity of dance, music, visual arts, lyrical song, poetry and theater of the culture and customs of the Spanish provinces and communities and their influence in Cuba

Program (selected events)

Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. Edificio de Arte Cubano

APRIL 12
5 pm

Opening of Arte y ritual en la catedral y en El camino de Santiago, photographic exhibition by Luis Gabú

Plaza de Armas

▶ APRIL 12 8pm / 9pm	Parrandas de Remedios; Opening Gala
	Firing of the Canon Ceremony, Crier Raúl Hernández Lores, of the Raíces Profundas Group. National Anthems of Cuba and Spain, and Anthem of Galicia by Jazz Band Juvenil (Amadeo Roldán Conservatory) and Hespérides Choir (Canarian Association)
	Balada de los dos abuelos, poem by Nicolás Guillén. Performed by Luis Carbonell (voice-off: Víctor Basilio Pérez (first dancer, Irene Rodríguez Company) and Osnel Delgado (director, Mal Paso Company). Choreography: Irene Rodríguez.
	Fefita, by José Urfé. Performed by: Jazz Band Juvenil (Amadeo Roldán Conservatory). Para Vigo me voy, by Ernesto Lecuona, and Hoy mi Habana, by José A. Quesada. Performed by: Luna Manzanares and Alejandro Falcón.
	Verso de Galicia a la Habana. Performed by: students of the University of Havana. Negra sombra, a capella version of the poem of the same name written by o de Rosalía de Castro. Performed by: Yaíma Sáez.
Estampa gallega performed by dancers and musicians of associations of the federation of Galician Societies in Cuba	

Basílica Menor del Convento San Francisco de Asís

▶ APRIL 13 5 pm	Opening of the photographic exhibition Memoria de peregrinación. Camino de Santiago, Primer Itinerario Cultural Europeo
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Teatro Mella

▶ APRIL 13 6 pm	Opening of Rolando Pujols's photographic exhibition de El camino de Santiago. Gala of the Federation of Spanish Societies in Cuba
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Instituto de Literatura y Lingüística

▶ APRIL 16 3 pm	Opening of the photographic exhibition Fondos bibliográficos de la emigración gallega en Cuba.
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Teatro Mella

▶ APRIL 16 8:30 pm	Concert by Buena Fe and Galician singer-songwriter Andrés Suárez.
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Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. Teatro del Edificio de Arte Cubano

▶ APRIL 17 6 pm	Concert by Cristina Pato (bagpipes) and Roberto Comesaña (accordeon).
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Teatro Mella

▶ APRIL 18 5 pm	Fragments of the Georges Bizet's opera Carmen, by the Teatro Lírico Nacional de Cuba.
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Teatro Nacional de Cuba

APRIL 18 8:30 pm	Gala of the Ballet Nacional de Cuba: Serenata goyesca (choreographed by Alicia Alonso, music by Joaquín Rodrigo)
	-Diálogo a 4 (choreographed by Alicia Alonso, music by Cervantes)
	-Tarde en la siesta (choreographed by Alberto Méndez, music by Ernesto Lecuona)
	-Pas de deux Don Quijote (choreographed by Alicia Alonso, Marta García and María Elena Llorente based on Marius Petipa's original version and Alexander Gorski's, music by Ludwig Minkus)
	-Impromptu Lecuona (choreographed by Alicia Alonso, , music by , music by Ernesto Lecuona)

Teatro Mella

APRIL 19 5 pm	Closing gala La leyenda que camina. Tribute to the Caballero de París (choreographed by Teresa L. Álvarez and Camila Tejero). Performed by: Sociedad Monterroso y Antas de Ulla
	Deus que ilumina (music by Julio Domínguez) / Iré a Santiago (music by Roberto Valera; text by Federico García Lorca). Performed by: Schola Cantorum Coralina, directed by Alina Orraca
	Diálogo a 4 (choreographed by Alicia Alonso, music by Ignacio Cervantes). Performed by: Ballet Nacional de Cuba
	Contradanza (Tony Pedroso) and Danzón (Darío Morgan). Performed by: Camerata Cortés.
	El último gaitero de La Habana. Tribute to Eduardo Lorenzo (world premiere, choreographed by Irene Rodríguez, music by Neel Gutiérrez). Performed by: Irene Rodríguez Company, Havana's Bagpipe band and choir of the Sociedad Cultural Rosalía de Castro
	Unha noite D'a eira do trigo and Unha Bago. Performed by: Dunia Pedraza, mezzo-prano of the Teatro Lírico Nacional de Cuba
	Majísimo (choreographed by Jorge García, music by Jules Massenet). Performed by: Ballet Nacional de Cuba
	Grande finale



Miguel Iglesias: Director of Danza Contemporánea de Cuba

When Miguel Iglesias, director of Danza Contemporánea de Cuba, was still in grammar school, he told his dad he wanted to be a dancer. Without saying a word, his father began to guide his son towards sports, especially swimming. Miguel became pretty good at it and eventually graduated from the Higher Institute of Sports and Physical Education. But his wish of becoming a dancer had never died. He danced whenever and wherever he could at social centers, comparsas during the carnivals, anywhere.

In 1967, encouraged by a friend who was dancing with the Cuban Television Ballet, he did an audition and passed the test. Two years later, in 1969, he traveled to Camagüey to work with the newly-created ballet. He studied there under Russian dancer Azari Plizetski (Alicia Alonso's partner for many years) and Loipa Araújo (one of the jewels of the Ballet Nacional de Cuba) and attended every course and workshop he could get hold of.

One day, he attended *Medea y los negreros*, by Ramiro Guerra's Conjunto Nacional de Danza, and in his own words, it was like "a slap in the face" that woke him up to what he wanted to do with

dance. He resolved to join the company and left for Havana. He didn't achieve his dream right away in the meantime he even studied Spanish Literature at the University of Havana. In 1975, in spite of a sprained ankle, he did an audition and became the newest member of Conjunto Nacional de Danza.

According to Miguel, he is a man of action, not an intellectual who dances. He has never left any opportunity go by—he premiered both Marianela Boán's and Rosario Cárdenas' first choreographies; he has danced and acted. He has been in the right place at the right time.

He was offered the direction of the company twice, in 1981, when he said no, and in 1984. He was 37 and still physically fit to continue dancing, but accepted because there many things that he thought were not right with the company. After Ramiro Guerra, the company's founder, there had been 14 successive directors, and some who knew nothing about dancing. Miguel describes it like a child who has had 14 stepfathers with everything that this implies. His goal became to unify the company and managed not only this but made his company the "mother" of many other modern



dance companies in Cuba, like DanzAbierta or Danza Combinatoria.

As Danza Contemporánea's director, he feels the need to share an artistic affinity with the people who work by his side, to listen to their opinions in the most professional manner and believe in their honesty. Their love for dance unites them in their enterprise.

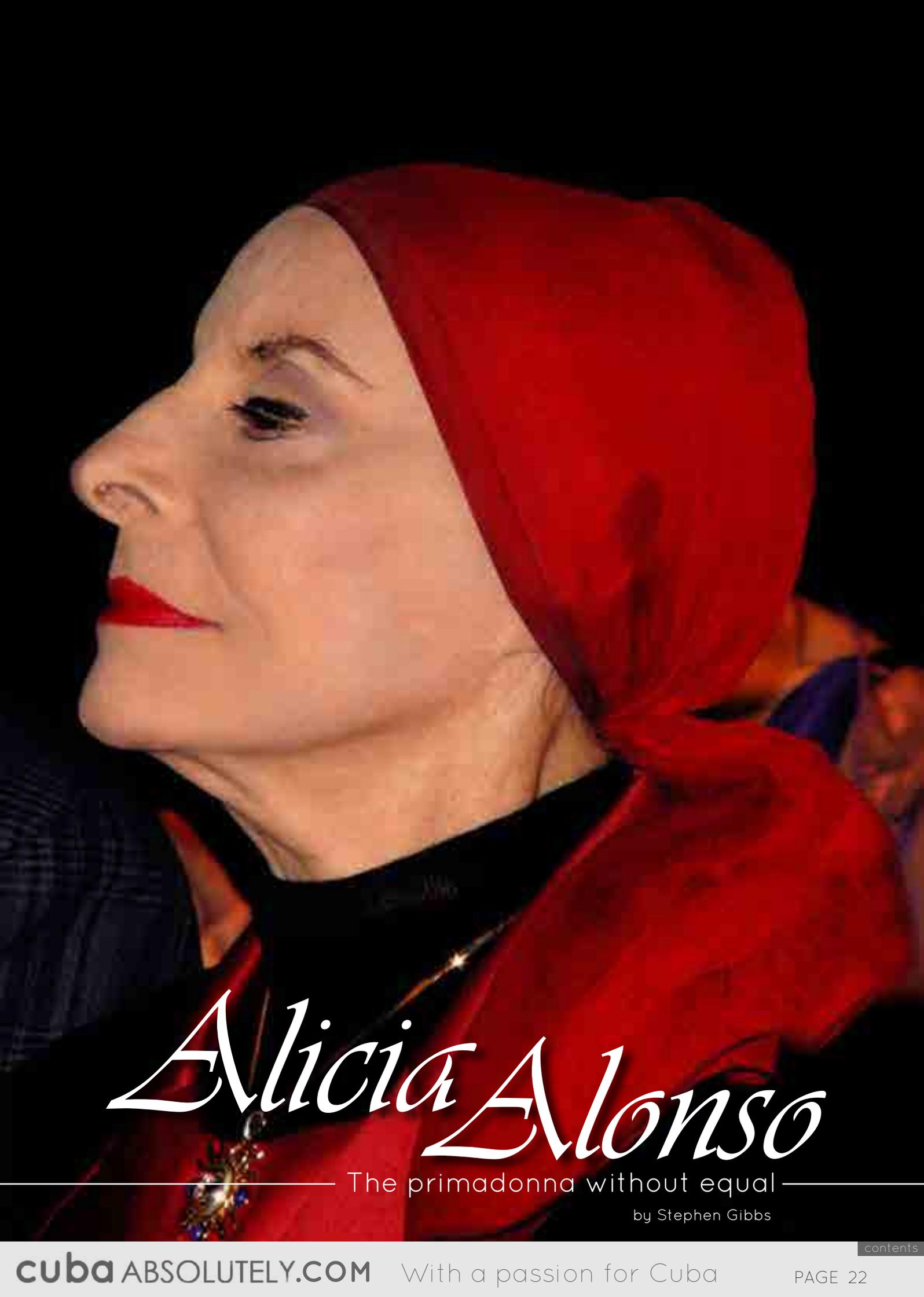
Almost 30 years later, Miguel Iglesias' Danza Contemporánea de Cuba is one of the most universal companies in the dance scene in the world and has proven its ability to adapt and interpret varied styles. Iglesias has preserved the innovative spirit of its founders and is faithful to the original premises, which has allowed him to be open to the latest trends in dance in the world.

"To talk about *cubanía* today," Miguel Iglesias confides, "is much more complex than years ago. Young people have other forms of expression and that does not make them less Cuban than our traditions. I think as a Cuban because I'm a Cuban, but I am also a citizen of the world and do not feel the need to show folkloric scenes to reaffirm the Cuban character."

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Alicia Alonso

— The primadonna without equal —

by Stephen Gibbs



days the move was not so unusual for well-connected Cubans. She soon became one of the founding members of the American Ballet Theatre. By the late 1940's, she was considered one of the world's greatest dancers.

"If you wanted to be a ballet dancer back then, you had to leave the country," she explains. But Alonso remained determined to promote ballet in Cuba, and so in 1948, in Havana, she set up the Alicia Alonso Ballet Company.

The school was largely funded by the then burgeoning Cuban high society, with wealthy patrons happy to have their names associated with such a distinguished project. The Cuban Ministry of Education also made a modest subsidy.

But by the mid fifties, the company had run into financial difficulties, and also political problems. Facing increasing domestic upheaval, President Batista attempted to recruit the Alonso Ballet Company to his cause. He wanted the group to dance on demand, often in order to distract people from nearby student protests. When the dancers refused, all funding was cut.

The school folded temporarily, and Alicia left Cuba once again, this time to join the Monte Carlo Ballet. She returned when Batista's government was overthrown by the Cuban Revolution in 1959.

To enter Alicia's Alonso's office is to visit an inner sanctum. She works in a small room, tucked away behind the unassuming headquarters of the Cuban National Ballet, on 17th Street in Vedado. Outside, gaggles of young ballerinas gather. Inside, an army of efficient secretaries protect her from the uninvited.

The room itself is dark, and spartan. The shutters are drawn. There is little furnishing apart from a single bookshelf and a large mahogany desk. Behind it sits the woman who has been the face of Cuban Ballet for almost seven decades.

In the 1950s, Alicia Alonso was voted one of the most beautiful women in the world by Harpers and Queen Magazine. You don't doubt it. Immaculately made up, her jet black hair tied back, wearing a long flowing gown, she is elegance defined. She greets me with a "good morning" in American English.

Alicia Ernestina de la Caridad del Cobre Martínez Hoya was born in Havana in 1920. Her family had no shortage of money. When it was noticed she had a talent for music and dance she was quickly enrolled in the Sociedad Pro-Arte Musical.

At 16, she married a fellow ballet student, Fernando Alonso, and the two moved to New York. In those





“Fidel Castro sent me a message,” she recalls. “He said, ‘what do you need to make the company the way you want it?’ So we sent him a big list of our dreams.” Within weeks, the school was receiving generous funding. It was renamed the Ballet Nacional de Cuba.

In one of the more evocative, and true, tales of the Cuban Revolution, the group then went on a tour of Cuba, demonstrating ballet to people in the most remote parts of the island. Most of the audience had never seen the dance before.

“It was beautiful,” she says. “People were amazed. But they understood what we were doing so quickly. Ballet is a natural art, the art of movement.”

Throughout her career, Alicia Alonso has struggled with her eyesight. In the 1940’s, she was first diagnosed with a detached retina, and she has been through several operations since. She is now nearly blind, but still actively supervises all the Cuban National Ballet’s work, and choreographs, using her loyal assistants to interpret her directions.

“I explain what I want, and show them by moving my arms and they understand perfectly well.”

Cuban ballet, while influenced by Russian and Soviet styles, is now recognized the world over as having its own unique form. Alicia Alonso says it reflects how Cubans really are. “The woman is very feminine and the man is very masculine. They dance as partners. And we move in a very light way.”

The grand dame of Cuba admits that it has been difficult to perform in a world dominated by commercial temptations. Over the years, several Cuban dancers have defected, and failed to return to Cuba after tours abroad. It is not a subject she likes to discuss. “It is like growing a beautiful big tree, only to see people taking branches away,” she says. “It hurts”.

But the tree keeps regrowing. The school Alicia founded will be celebrating its 67th birthday this year.

[CONTINUE TO READ FULL ARTICLE + SLIDESHOW](#)



Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba

Manolo Micler, director of the Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba, will receive the Award granted by the 2015 Danza Olorum Festival that will take place in the city of Camagüey from April 22-26. This tribute is dedicated to the dancer, teacher, choreographer and artistic director of the National Folkloric Company of Cuba for his contributions to preserve the Cuban folkloric legacy. His many choreographies form the folkloric anthology of Cuba.

Founded in 1962 to delve into and recover certain manifestations of traditional popular Cuban culture, the Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba—National Folkloric Company of Cuba—outcome has been a repertoire of over 70 productions dedicated to Afro-Cuban dance and music, especially those that represent the Yoruba, Congo and Abakuá deities, rumba and comparsas, música campesina (typical Cuban country music) and popular dances, among others.

Afro-Cuban ethnologist and writer/poet Rogelio Martínez Furé, Mexican choreographer Rodolfo Reyes and a group of exceptionally talented dancers and singers with no previous formal education in their arts, including Lázaro Ross, Nieves Fresneda and Zenaida Armenteros, are all founding members of the company. Formed today by graduates from the National School of Arts and directed by Manolo Micler, the company preserves the legacy of its founders and has incorporated new acting and choreographic trends without losing its popular essence.

The company, which has travelled widely to the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia having performed over 2,000 times in the most famous stages in the world, has won a significant number of national and international awards.

Sponsored by the Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba, FolkCuba, a two-week long International Folklore Laboratory, is held twice a year, in January and July, in which experts in Cuban folklore dances teach Cuban dance and music of African and Spanish origin, as well as the principal Cuban percussion instruments. The “secrets” of mambo, cha-cha-cha, rumba, mozambique, pilón, conga, and dance and drum beating related to African religious rites are revealed by outstanding figures of the Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba.

[CONTINUE TO READ FULL ARTICLE + SLIDESHOW](#)



Eva

With a passion for flamenco

by Margaret Atkins

In its attempt to conserve traditions brought from the mother-country, Spain bequeathed Cuba a system of charitable and recreational societies. Gradually these became reservoirs of Hispanic culture, particularly for music and the dance. A building belonging to one of these societies in the Havana neighborhood of Santos Suarez is headquarters for the Company "Ecos", this year celebrating its fifteenth birthday by dancing and singing flamenco.

On the roof of the building is a somewhat precarious, modest but pleasant hall, with salmon-colored walls that reflect the light coming in through the large windows that also allow some fresh air to provide relief from the heat of this February that seems to be August. We are welcomed by the company's director Ana Rosa Meses. Ana Rosa is a young, lovely woman with a body that has been shaped by a dancer's training and at the same time reveals sensuous Cuban curves. She explains that to dance flamenco well, dancers do not necessarily have to have the extremely slim silhouettes they need for other dance styles. Quite the opposite; you need a bit more substance to create an attitude in the *tablao* and imbue the movements with all the character they demand. As she speaks, the passion she feels for her work is obvious and, as another

dancer in the company later tells us, this is more than an art form, it is a way of life.

One by one, the company's troupe filters in; first the dancers and then the musicians. There is the more traditional style, coming to us from the gypsy gatherings of Andalucia, more suited for the taverns and *tablaos* that abound in Cuba; and then there is the more stylized version, where the *rumba flamenca* appears to have African overtones and a *guaguanco* is danced that electrifies us with its expressive power. The accompanying music is live. Of course the strumming guitars and the voices of the *cantaoras* are there and even though in Cuba no real specialized training for this art form exists, the artists know the traditional lyrics and adopt manners of singing that are reminiscent of the inflections and pronunciations of Spain. They also sing flamenco-tinged boleros and Cuban songs. And over there beside the *caja*, are two *tumbadoras* and a bongo.

Although most of the young dancers are students of National Arts School classes there are also a few whose only training over the years has been provided by Ana Rosa. They teach classes for girls who love flamenco with a passion. "Because this is something you have to love". They then explain





that everything begins with the music because that is what contributes the rhythm and the feeling. The heels of their shoes become instruments and add to the acoustics, creating true “echoes” deep within their audiences.

We are invited to one of their gatherings where, in an intimate setting, they sing and dance. We are told that that is where the most delightful improvisations are born, the ones that don't make it to the stage because the pressures of the audiences tend to dampen them. “These are beautiful moments, but they are terribly ephemeral”. We are also told about their regular shows at El Mesón de la Flota in Habana Vieja which turns into a flamenco *tablaó* every night from Friday to Monday. They satisfy everyone's taste in flamenco: pure flamenco and the Cuban hybrid. They tell us about their performances around the world, success in the United Arab Emirates, their recently won Villanueva Critics' Prize that seems to be their birthday gift, their long and fruitful alliance with the famous Spanish dancer Cristina Hoyos and other well-known *bailaóres* and *cantaóres* who come to Cuba to give classes. “We go to the Malecon, we sing and dance at parties, like they do in Andalucía and we learn more there than we do in any classroom”.

Passion and flamenco: that's it. No more, no less. I depart with my soul filled with music, my spirit affected by the sadness of the *cantos* and my feet wanting to strike out rhythms with my heels.



[CONTINUE TO READ FULL ARTICLE + SLIDESHOW](#)



Contaminación

Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. Edificio de Arte Cubano
Through April 29

The exhibition explores how photography has influenced painting and printmaking from the 1960s and how, at the same time, it was “contaminated” with codes from these manifestations, which, subsequently, video art also made use of, until the time when making a classification becomes very difficult. This process can be seen in the works of Raúl Martínez, José Gómez Fresquet (Frémez), Flavio Garcandía, Rubén Torres Llorca, Rogelio López Marín (Gory), José Manuel Fors, Leandro Soto, Arturo Cuenca, Consuelo Castañeda, Martha María Pérez, Sandra Ramos, Lázaro Saavedra, José Ángel Toirac, Juan Carlos Alom, Luis Gómez, Ernesto Leal, Carlos Garaicoa, Manuel Piña, René Peña, Raúl Cordero and Fernando Rodríguez.

Casa de Asia

OPENS APRIL
17

Kiri-e: el arte japonés del papel recortado. The exhibition puts the viewer into contact with the Japanese tradition of cutting a single sheet of black paper to create a noticeable artistic composition when it is placed on a white sheet of paper or of other colors. Shu Kubo is one of the most significant masters of Kiri-e, for his innovative technique of combining colors, using different washi papers for a dimensional finish in his works, which are considered one of the most important influences in the art of paper cutting.

Casa Juan Gualberto Gómez

OPENS APRIL
17

Humor a golpe de lápiz exhibits David Williams Gallart Núñez's precocious talent for humorous drawing. Barely 15, he took first place in the José Luis Posada 2013 National Competition. In 2014, at the Juan David National Competition of Personal Caricature, he received the award given by Juan David's family and won second place in the event.

Casa Victor Hugo

▶ OPENS APRIL 20	Alain Dumbardon. Exhibition by this important Martinique artist who addresses the theme of memory using a worldwide recognized technique and through an encounter of the artist's individual memory with the signs and imprint of the collective memory of the Caribbean.
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Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam

▶ THROUGHOUT APRIL	Quisiera ser Wifredo Lam..... pero no se va a poder. A retrospective of Flavio Garcíandía's work, with over 70 pieces created from 1973 to 2014, now in the hands of private collector and the Cuban State. Drawings, videos, paintings and installations illustrate the different phases of this important artist and teacher. Radical and inquisitive, F. Garcíandía has always paid close attention to the latest trends in contemporary visual arts.
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Centro Cultural Fresa y Chocolate

▶ THROUGH APRIL 15	El objeto como consuelo. Exhibition by Yomer Montejo.
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Centro Provincial de Artes Plásticas y Diseño

▶ THROUGH APRIL 10	Willensnation (Nación por deseo). Works by Carlos Zorrilla recreating certain elements which for the artist form the concept of nation.
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Cine Chaplin

▶ THROUGH APRIL 15	Contra el vacío. Paintings and drawings of the little-known visual art work of filmmaker Nicolás Guillén Landrián, whose prolonged absence from Cuban film seems to have ceased with the tribute paid by Muestra Joven del ICAIC.
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Fábrica de Arte Cubano

▶ THROUGH APRIL 26	Arquitectos cubanos por el mundo. Cuban Architects Around the World is the name of the exhibition of architectural projects by Cuban architects who live abroad.
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Galería Artis

▶ OPENS APRIL 17	Los silencios no existen. Solo show by outstanding Cuban artists Moisés Finalé.
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Factoría Habana

▶ THROUGHOUT APRIL	Occidente tropical. Refers to an anthropological and philosophical concern that invites reflection on a part of the Cuban culture of the 1980s and 90s through the markedly conceptual work of Esterio Segura, in which the course of historical and sociocultural processes and their effect on the individuals who are the anonymous protagonists or sufferers, and their sexual, religious, ideological and political references are expressed through drawing, sculpture, photography, installation, with a consciously eclectic and transgressive intention, ironic and referring to the inevitable kitsch of popular representations.
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Galería Collage Habana

▶ THROUGH APRIL 13	Nadie es puro. Solo exhibition of Angel Rivero Sierra (Andy)—for whom “no one is pure in relation to race, but neither are we pure in terms of influences”: there is always a reference”—who has gathered abstractions in white, black, red and embedded objects; he also experiments with light, a result of the year he spent making utilitarian lamps from recycled objects.
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Galería Galiano

▶ THROUGHOUT APRIL	Proteína. Michel Mirabal goes back to his leitmotiv, the Cuban flag, reinterpreting it using various textures and materials (grains of rice, bullet shells, nails, meat, pigments and resins) in digital prints mounted on Plexiglas, on light boxes to depict ideas about freedom, identity and resistance.
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Galería Latinoamericana. Casa de las Américas

▶ THROUGHOUT APRIL	Videoarde. Video crítico latinoamericano y caribeño. The show includes videos by over 30 artists from Mexico, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Panamá, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Paraguay, among other countries.
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Galería Servando

THROUGH APRIL 20	Saliva ajena. Exhibition by Nelson Jalil and Lester Alvarez, with video works, paintings and objects, conceived as strategies to apprehend a slippery knowledge and create new possibilities in the free association of shapes and meanings.
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Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes.
Edificio de Arte Universal

THROUGHOUT APRIL	La importancia de ser. Exhibition of Belgian contemporary art with more than 50 works by important artists of international renown.
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Riera Estudio

THROUGH APRIL 12	Ciudades en mi mente. For Giselle Victoria Gómez, “space opens its doors to the–timeless and nameless– (in)visible cities of Damián [Valdés], expecting the viewer to discover them, walk into them, live their own experiences, stumble, rise by way of a timely flying car; find the Gothic city of superheroes with modern skyscrapers, a temple, war and peace, hope and discomfort, lack of love, their story or the stories of others, water, terrestrial and surreal worlds...and then find a way out.”
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Hotel Armadores de Santander

THROUGH APRIL 19	La abstracción en un viaje sin retorno. Works by artist and professor Abenamar Bauta Delgado.
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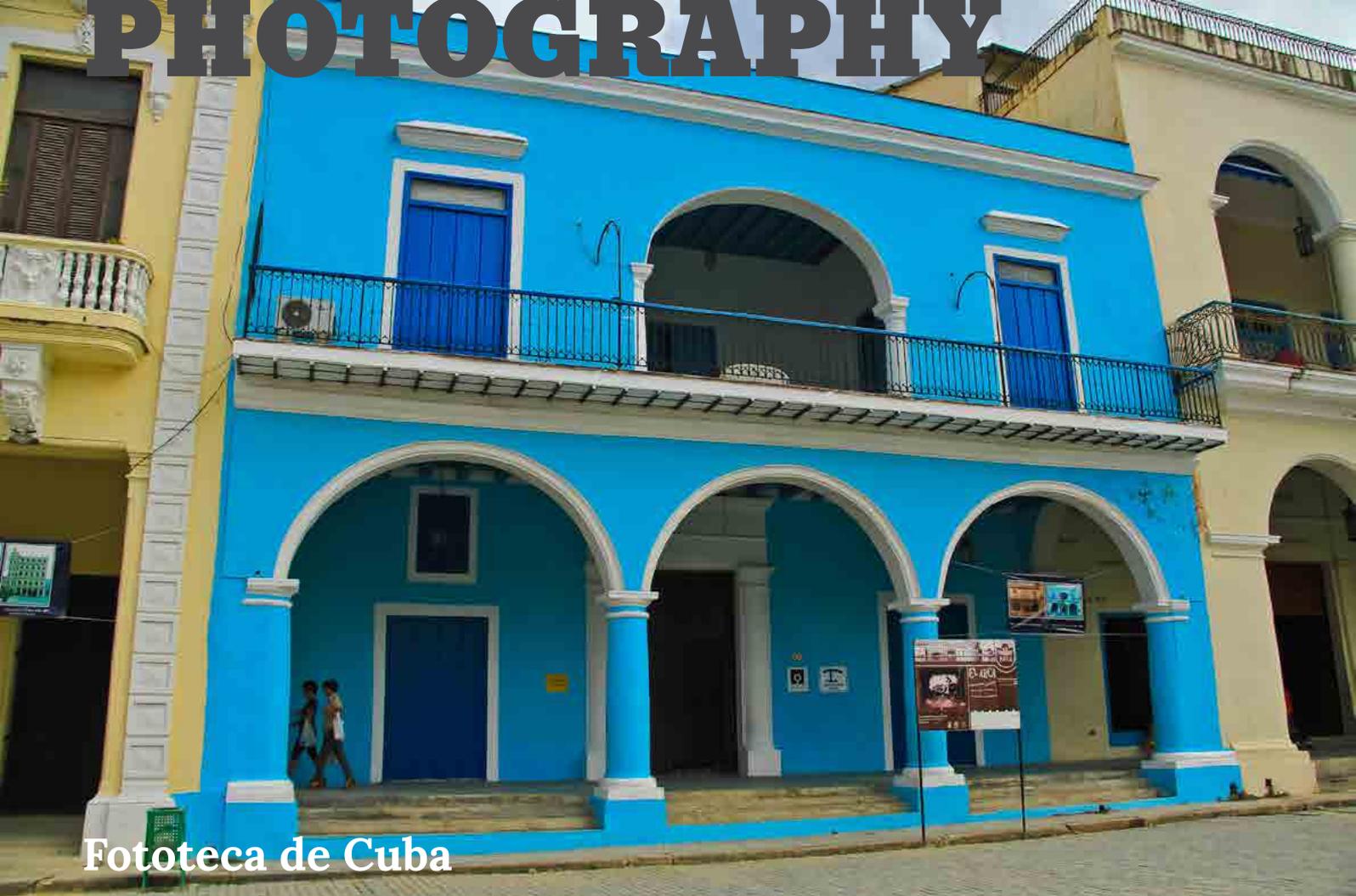
Palacio de Lombillo

THROUGH APRIL 17	Hacia el poeta. Reinterpretation of the Spanish artist Mariví Nebreda, of the work of great poets of the Spanish language.
THROUGHOUT APRIL 17	Entretejidos. Contemporary artists such as Ruth Mariet Trueba, Irina González, Jorge Oliva and Duvier del Dago, among others, recontextualize the tradition of weaving and embroidery, and thread represented or used as material, gives unity to sculptures, paintings or metalwork presented by the creators.

Sala Villena. Uneac

THROUGHOUT APRIL	Tabla rasa. Solo exhibition by Aliosky García Sosa
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Fototeca de Cuba

THROUGH APRIL 6

Feromonas. This photographic work on the principal bells that are currently rung in Cuba exploits the symbolic connotations of bells. The images turn to a sort of matter photography in which blood is used as a modifying substance of the image.

Centro Hispano-Americano de Cultura

OPENS APRIL
15

Kashi. Spanish photographer Pablo Tarrero shares his look into a culture and a view of the world that surprises and dazzles him through pictures taken of the city of Kashi, India.

Galería Espacio Abierto

THROUGH
APRIL 12

Ciclo de vida. Photographic project made up by artists from The Workshop (José Ariel Alonso, Raismary Diamett, Sonia Mirabal, Víctor Manuel Méndez, Wanda Canals, Maribel Amador Bello, William Ferrer, Lourdes Bermúdez and Yoel Mayor), who work especially with documentary photography, but also with “constructed” photography.

Expocuba. Pabellón de la cultura

THROUGH
SEPTEMBER 1

Miradas teveladoras. An approach to different moments of the Cuban Revolution through the work carried out by a group of excellent photographers that captured those moments: Alberto Díaz Gutiérrez (Korda), Raúl Corrales, Osvaldo and Roberto Salas, Liborio Noval, Ernesto Fernández, José Agraz, Perfecto Romero and Luis Pierce.

Alas

Teatro Martí

Fridays & Saturdays, 8:30pm; Sundays, 5pm

Rerun of the successful production Alas by the Ballet Liza Alfonso, an original idea, artistic direction and choreography of its director.



MUSIC

CONTEMPORARY FUSION



Club Habana Party
Photo Alex Mene

The contemporary fusion and electronic music scene has expanded recently as new bars and clubs have opened party promoters have organized events in parks and public spaces. Good live music venues include Bertolt Brecht (Wed: Interactivo, Sunday: Déjà-vu) and El Sauce (check out the Sunday afternoon Máquina de la Melancolía) as well as the newly opened Fábrica de Arte Cubano which has concerts most nights Thursday through Sunday as well as impromptu smaller performances inside.

In Havana's burgeoning entertainment district along First Avenue from the Karl Marx theatre to the aquarium you are spoilt for choice with the always popular Don Cangreco featuring good live music (Kelvis Ochoas and David Torrens alternate Fridays), Las Piedras (insanely busy from 3am) and El Palio and Melem bar—both featuring different singers and acts in smaller more intimate venues.

Café Cantante, Teatro Nacional

WEDNESDAYS 5 pm	Qva Libre
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Café Concert El Sauce

SUNDAYS 5 pm	La Máquina de la Melancolía, with Frank Delgado and Luis Alberto García
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Tercera y 8

MONDAYS 11 pm	Baby Lores
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Café Corner

THURSDAYS 10:30 pm	Tesis de Menta
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Fresa y Chocolate

SUNDAYS 10 pm	Aceituna Sin Hueso
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Havana Hard Rock

EVERY OTHER FRIDAY	Soul Train, a show of soul music
SAT & SUN 10 pm	Cover rock bands

Club Turf

THURSDAYS 10 pm	Djoy
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Le Select

SUNDAYS 5pm	Los Ángeles
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SALSA / TIMBA

Casa de la Música Habana

MONDAYS & TUESDAYS	11 pm Havana Show and guests
WEDNESDAYS	11 pm NG La Banda
THURSDAYS	5 pm Pupy y los que Son Son 11 pm Charanga Latina
FRIDAYS	5 pm Tania Pantoja
SATURDAYS	11 pm Pedrito Calvo y La Nueva Justicia

Piano Bar Tun Tun

MONDAYS	5 pm La Reina y La Real
THURSDAYS	11 pm NG La Banda
SATURDAYS	11 pm Manana Club
SUNDAYS	11 pm Nesty y Presencia Light

Casa de la Música de Miramar

MONDAYS	11 pm Sur Caribe
WEDNESDAYS	11 pm Adalberto Álvarez y su Son
THURSDAYS	5 pm Manolito Simonet
FRIDAYS	5 pm Manolito Simonet 11 pm NG La Banda
SUNDAYS	5 pm Bamboleo

Jardines del 1830

FRIDAYS 10 pm	Azúcar Negra
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Tercera y 8

WEDNESDAYS 11 pm	Alain Daniel
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Café Cantante, Teatro Nacional

MONDAYS	11 pm Manana Club
FRIDAYS	5 pm El Noro y Primera Clase

MUSIC

JAZZ



Jazz Café

Shows: 10:30pm - 2am

Mellow, sophisticated and freezing due to extreme air conditioning, the Jazz Café is not only an excellent place to hear some of Cuba's top jazz musicians, but the open-plan design also provides for a good bar atmosphere if you want to chat. Less intimate than La Zorra y el Cuervo - located opposite Melia Cohiba Hotel.

Café Jazz Miramar

Shows: 11 pm - 2am

This new jazz club has quickly established itself as one of the very best places to hear some of Cuba's best musicians jamming. Forget about smoke filled lounges, this is clean, bright - take the fags outside. While it is difficult to get the exact schedule and in any case expect a high level of improvisation when it is good it is very good. A full house is something of a mixed house since on occasion you will feel like holding up your own silence please sign! Nonetheless it gets the thumbs up from us.

Asociación Cubana de Derechos de Autor Musical

▶ APRIL 16 6 pm	Alexis Bosch (pianist) and Proyecto Jazz Cubano.
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UNEAC

▶ APRIL 9 2 pm	Peña La Esquina del Jazz hosted by showman Bobby Carcassés.
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Fábrica de Arte Cubano

▶ APRIL 3 & 10 7pm	Los Bailadores de Santa Amalia
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Edificio de Arte Cubano.
Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes

▶ APRIL 2 7pm	Emir Santa Cruz (clarinetist and saxophonist), with singer Suel Matos, and guest musicians Yissy García (drums), Aryam Varona (bass) and Jesús Pupo (piano)
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Café Miramar

▶ SATURDAYS 10 pm	Roberto Carcassés (pianist & composer) and his trio
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Jazz Café

▶ WED & THU 10pm	Reynier Mariño and his group
▶ FRIDAYS 9:30pm	Zule Guerra (singer & composer) and Blues D'Havana

Jardines del teatro Mella

▶ APRIL 22 5pm	Zule Guerra (singer & composer) and Blues D'Havana
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MUSIC BOLERO, FOLKLORE, SON & TROVA

Asociación Yoruba de Cuba

SATURDAYS 4 pm	Los Ibellis (Folkloric group)
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Café Cantante, Teatro Nacional

THURSDAYS 5pm	Elain Morales
SATURDAYS 5pm	Waldo Mendoza

Café Concert El Sauce

TUESDAYS 8 pm	Plus Trova with Charly Salgado and guests.
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Café Teatro Bertolt Brecht

APRIL 25 4 pm	Rafael Espín and guests
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Casa del Alba

APRIL 3 5 pm	Trovador Eduardo Sosa
APRIL 23 6 pm	Peña El Canto de Todos, with Vicente Feliú

Casa de la Cultura Comunitaria Mirta Aguirre

APRIL 26 5 pm	Get-together with trovador Ireño García.
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Casa de la Cultura de Plaza

APRIL 11 7 pm	Peña with Marta Campos.
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Centro Cultural Habaneciendo

SUNDAYS 3pm	Filin with Fausto Durán and guests
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Casa Memorial Salvador Allende

APRIL 24 5 pm	Peña La Juntamenta, with trovador Ángel Quintero.
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Casa de la Música Habana

SUNDAYS 5 pm	Yoruba Andabo
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Centro Memorial Martin Luther King, Jr.

APRIL 16 4:30 pm	Marta Campos
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El Jelengue de Areíto

MONDAYS 5 pm	Son del Nene
WEDNESDAYS 5 pm	Trovando, a meeting with good trova.
THURSDAYS 5 pm	Conjunto de Arsenio Rodríguez
FRIDAYS 5 pm	Rumberos de Cuba

Hotel Telégrafo

FRIDAYS 9:30 pm	Ivette Cepeda.
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Hurón Azul, UNEAC

SATURDAYS 9 pm	Bolero Night
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Pabellón Cuba

FRIDAYS 4 pm	Peña Tres Tazas with trovador Silvio Alejandro
SATURDAY 4 pm	Peña Participo with trovador Juan Carlos Pérez

Barbaram Pepito's Bar

SATURDAYS 10pm	Alternting Raúl Torres and Erick Sánchez
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Fresa y Chocolate

TUESDAYS 9pm	Trova hosted by Richard Luis and Eric Méndez
THURSDAY 10:30pm	Fernando Becquer

Centro Iberoamericano de la Décima

APRIL 4 3 pm	Duo Ad Libitum
APRIL 26 5 pm	El Jardín de la Gorda with trovadors from every generation.

CLASSICAL MUSIC



Basílica Menor de San Francisco de Asís

▶ APRIL 4 6 pm	Concert with the Orfeón Choir from Puerto Rico and the Exaudi choir conducted by María Felicia Pérez, interpreting a mass to St. Francis of Assisi and a Cuban mass, among other works from the international repertoire.
APRIL 18-25 6 pm	12th Chamber Music Festival.
APRIL 30 6 pm	Concert to celebrate the 20th anniversary as a professional singer of Milagros de los Ángeles with the performances of sopranos Laura Ulloa (Grand Prix at the Rodrigo Prats 2014 Competition), Irenia Corzo and Olivia Méndez, and countertenor Lesby Bautista, accompanied on the piano by Yaliev Álvarez and Beatriz Batista; artistic director, Daniel Noriega. The program is made up of arias from operas of different styles from the Renaissance to contemporary music.

Biblioteca Nacional José Martí

▶ SATURDAYS 6 pm	Concerts by chamber soloists and ensembles.
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Casa del ALBA Cultural

▶ APRIL 9 5 pm	En Confluencia, conducted by guitarists Eduardo and Galy Martín.
APRIL 12 5 pm	Tarde de Concierto, conducted by soprano Lucy Provedo.
APRIL 19 5 pm	De Nuestra América, conducted by pianist Alicia Perea.
APRIL 26 5 pm	Concert by guitarist Rosa Matos.

Centro Hispano Americano de Cultura

▶ APRIL 7 & 23 5 pm	Choral meeting of vocal ensembles from de Cuba and Canada.
▶ APRIL 18 5 pm	Concert by Schola Cantorum Coralina, conducted by Alina Orraca.

Iglesia de Paula

▶ 21-24 7 pm	12th Chamber Music Festival.
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Sala Ignacio Cervantes

▶ APRIL 10 5 pm	Alejandro Rodríguez (cello), Evelio Tieleles (violin) and the instrumental ensemble Nuestro Tiempo will play works by Vivaldi.
▶ APRIL 12 5 pm	Concert Entre arias, with outstanding operatic singers along with pianist Vilma Garriga.
▶ APRIL 19 5 pm	The Amadeo Roldán String Quartet will play works by Philip Glass, Heitor Villa-Lobos and Franz Schubert.
▶ APRIL 21-22 5 pm	Concert by las pianists Katerina Rivero Hristova, Lianne Vega Serrano and Dánae Olano García, prizewinners of the UNEAC 2014 Interpretation Competition.
▶ APRIL 24 5 pm	Ivette Betancourt (soprano) and Maite Aboy (piano), and guest musicians Niurka González (flute) and Alejandro Martínez (cello), have announced a program dedicated to Maurice Ravel.

Centro Cultural Padre Félix Varela

▶ APRIL 11 7 pm	Harpichordist Kathleen McIntosh will play works by Bach, Father Soler and Leo Brouwer, among other composers. Guest musicians: Anolan González (viola) and Moisés Santiesteban (organ).
▶ APRIL 18 7 pm	Closing concert of the Harpsichord Interpretario Workshop given by Kathleen McIntosh.

Casa de Artes y Tradiciones Chinas

▶ APRIL 23 11 pm	Operatic performances dedicated to Cuban tenor Jesús Li.
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Sala Avenida

▶ APRIL 5 11 pm	Pianist and conductor Ana Martín and her chamber orchestra will dedicate this concert to the great Cuban pianist Frank Emilio Flynn.
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Sala Covarrubias, Teatro Nacional

▶ SUNDAYS 11 pm	Concerts with the National Symphony Orchestra.
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Decamerón

Teatro El Público / Production: Carlos Díaz
Fri & Sat 8:30pm; Sun 5pm
Teatro Trianón

Several stories from Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Decameron* are put onstage with more than a hint at Cuba today. Those who expect nudity galore from Carlos Díaz are in for a surprise.

Mecánica

Argos Teatro / Production: Carlos Celdrán
Fri & Sat 8:30pm; Sun 5pm, Argos Teatro

Play written by award-winning Abel González Melo.

Baile sin máscaras

Teatro Aire Frío / Production: Eduardo Eimil
April 5, 9:30pm, Fábrica de Arte Cubano

Fun and thought-provoking comedy by Junior García, in which four young men set out to create a micro-society that is absolutely free of prohibitions and "masks."

Litoral

Ludi Teatro / Production: Miguel Abreu
Fri & Sat, 8:30pm; Sun, 5pm, Centro Cultural Bertolt Brecht

Play by the Canadian-Lebanese playwright, actor and director Wajdi Mouwad, which begins when Wilfrid is having the best sex in his life, the telephone rings and he receives the news that his father has died.

La toma de La Habana por los ingleses

Pequeño Teatro de La Habana / Production: José Milián, Fri & Sat, 8:30pm; Sun, 5pm, Café teatro Bertolt Brecht

Written in 1969 by José Milián, the play is a classic of Cuban contemporary theater. This new version offers a more contemporary look at the events that took place in 1762 when Havana was given over to Great Britain by the Governor of the island, Juan de Prado Portocarrero.

Las heridas del viento

Compañía teatral Hubert de Blanck / Production: Orietta Medina
Fri & Sat, 8:30pm; Sun, 5pm
Sala Hubert de Blanck

As in *Litoral*, in this dramatic comedy by Juan Carlos Rubio, the death of a father reveals an unknown past to his son. From laughter to emotions, from joy to pain, the author asks himself if he truly makes his own decisions or is he a marionette of fate.



Siempre Havana

Circo Nacional de Cuba
Sat & Sun, 4pm & 7pm
Carpa Trompoloco

New circus show with exciting acts combined with the vernacular humor that the first circuses in Cuba were based on. The kids will love the clowns, the trained animals, the fire-eaters, as well as other highly skilled acts, such as aerial silk, tumbling and trampoline, juggling, acrobatics, and much more.



Fantasías

Circo Nacional de Cuba
Sat & Sun, 3pm
Cine Yara

Jugglers, contortionists, Strongman Trio, balancing objects, fire-eaters, magic and illusionism, and clowns are just some of the attractions of the National Circus in this popular spot in El Vedado.



La Cuca

Grupo de teatro El Arca
April 6-15, Fri, Sat & Sun, 3pm
Teatro de títeres El Arca

Directed by Sara Millares with music by Ernesto Lecuona, this mask puppet show and live actors who sing will perform a unique version of the popular children's tale *La Cucarachita Martina*.

Festival de Música de Cámara



April 18-25
Concert halls in Havana

The Chamber Music Festival aims to promote the interpretation, development and performance of this form of classical music in Cuba. Tributes will be paid to Shostakovich, Händel, Bach, and Ravel, and Cuban composers Edgardo Martín, Ignacio Cervantes and Carmen Valdés, as well as the Sonantas Habaneras guitar orchestra on its 20th anniversary, and its director, teacher and guitarist Jesús Ortega, on his 80th birthday 80; and the Ventus wind quintet on its 10th anniversary. Concerts, master classes and workshops will be held, as well as lectures on the life and work of teacher Carmen Valdés. Participating musicians include the following orchestras: Música Eterna, Sonantas Habaneras, Orquesta de Cámara de La Habana, Flautas Diadema, Ensemble de Guitarras

de Cienfuegos, Conjunto de Música Antigua Exulten, Conjunto de Música Antigua Ars Longa; duets Promúsica, Ondina, Con-Trastes and Netzaj; trios Lecuona, D'Cámara and Móviles; quartets Amadeo Roldán and Brindis de Salas; quintet Ventus Habana; pianist Aldo López-Gavilán, soprano Ivette Betancourt, clarinetist Alejandro Calzadilla and saxophonist Javier Zalba, among others.



VI Premio de Composición

April 6-10
Casa de las Américas, UNEAC

Aimed at promoting and disseminating the most recent symphonic, chamber and choral music compositions, the Casa de las Américas invites all composers from Latin America and the Caribbean to participate in the Composition Award, which this year will be dedicated to works for voice (up to four vocalists) and any format of up to nine instruments.

The Latin American Composition and Interpretation Workshop (Sala Villena, UNEAC, opens April 6, mornings) will include a program of lectures, master classes and discussions of works. With the participation of Manuel Ceide (Puerto Rico), Ekaterina Chatski (Costa Rica) and Rodrigo Sigal (Mexico).

The afternoons of April 7-9 have been set aside for Composers in the Spotlight with the participation of guest composers and Cuban colleagues.

The concert program includes the performances of Ensemble Álea 21 from Puerto Rico, cuban violinist Evelio Tieles, the José White Quartet from México; the Amadeo Roldán String Quartet, the Música Eterna Chamber orchestra, to name a few. Rodrigo Sigal will perform in concert at the sala Che Guevara of Casa de las Américas at 7pm, April 10.



Festival Piña Colada

April 2-5

The first Piña Colada Festival was held in Camaguey in 2004, and since the second edition it has been held in the central province of Ciego de Avila. The largest fusion music festival in Cuba will host around 400 musicians of various styles and genres of contemporary Cuban music, including Arnaldo Rodríguez (President of the event) y su Talismán, Charanga Latina, Qva Libre, El Niño y La Verdad, Manana Club, Alabao, Christian y Rey, PMM, Bamboleo, singer-songwriters David Torrens, Diego Gutiérrez, Charly Salgado, Nelson Valdés, Ariel Barreiro and Tony Ávila, and the children's theater company La Colmenita.



VIII Jornada Nacional de Teatro Callejero

April 8-12, Matanzas

This year, the main theme of the Street Theatre Festival will be living statutes. Participating theater companies include D'Morón Teatro (Ciego de Ávila), Gigantería and Danza Teatro Retazos (Havana), Tecma (Pinar del Río), A Dos Manos (Santiago de Cuba), Teatro Andante (Granma), El Carro de Tespi and Teatro de los Elementos (Cienfuegos), Teatro El Bosque (Ciénaga de Zapata), Visitants (Spain), Compañía de María Baric (Finland) and María Cotto (US). The event also includes exhibitions, competitions, workshops, tributes and theoretical discussion. One of the guest to the event will be artist Alexis Leyva (Kcho), San Alejandro Academy of Art students, theater, dance, circus groups and from any other artistic manifestation who perform on the street.



II Concurso Nacional de Colografía Belkis Ayón

April 7-10

Cienfuegos

Besides the competition which will receive around 60 works by 35 artists, the events will also hoist a colloquium and group exhibitions by Colombian and Mexican printmakers, a solo show by Marcel Molina, prizewinner of the first Belkis Ayón National Collagraphy Competition in.

Thank you for making our first show in
Havana and Cuba EPIC.
Te amamos Cuba! You know how to ROCK!

The Dead Daisies on Facebook

HAVANA ROCKED WITH THE DEAD DAISIES

Text and photos by Y. Monte



The concert played by the super rock band The Dead Daisies at Havana's Salón Rosado on February 28 shows that rock in Cuba is alive and kicking. The popular venue was filled with people from all over who had arrived very early in anticipation to this once-in-a-lifetime experience. Some got there on foot, others took almendrón-taxis or buses and those from other nearby (and not so nearby) towns took the train. As part of the audience myself, I can assure you that the Salón Rosado has never before been filled like that day. The lines to get in began several hours before the show began. And when the doors were finally opened, an avalanche of people of all ages quickly rushed to get the best places. There was virtually no free space there that evening.

Cuban super rock star David Blanco was in charge of opening the show. The Dead Daisies manager Dave Edwards had seen his concert at the Karl Marx Theater, had liked his performance and invited him to open their show in Havana. Other Cuban musicians included Anima Mundi and Roberto Perdomo. Cuban percussionists Yaimí Karell and Ruy Adrián López-Nussa contributed a Caribbean touch playing alongside Brian Tichy and put the night on fire.

The band had played three nights before to a sold out crowd at Havana's top rock venue, the Maxim Rock Club. They needed security to help them get from the bus to the venue due to over capacity with masses of people outside, all desperate to catch a glimpse of The Dead Daisies. The show was a preview of what was to take place at the Salón Rosado.

The lineup for the Cuba tour featured guitarist Richard Fortus (Guns N' Roses, Psychedelic Furs), Darryl Jones (Rolling Stones, Sting, Peter Gabriel), Bernard Fowler (Rolling Stones), keyboardist Dizzy Reed (Guns N' Roses, Hookers & Blow), guitarist David Lowy (Mink, Red Phoenix), guitarist Marco Mendoza (Thin Lizzy, Black Star Riders), Brian Tichy (Ozzy Osbourne, Billy Idol) on drums and singer & guitarist John Corabi (Motley Crue, ESP, The Scream).

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“CALLE CERO”

An interview with
Tomás Gutiérrez Alea

by Lorenzo DeStefano

Even on the move like this I feel the heat that is Havana in early June. Fresh from a cold shower at the Hotel Presidenté, I travel by taxi along the vast and crumbling Malecón. Passing over the Río Almendares I arrive at the northern edge of the Miramar district just before one. The address I'm looking for is número 110, Calle Cero. This soon turns out to be a vacant lot behind the shuttered mass of the Sierra Maestra Hotel. Planted haphazardly with maize and dehydrated squash, it's not what I expected after speaking with Tomás Gutiérrez Alea two days ago from Santiago. I show the driver the address I wrote down at the time. He repeats his initial take on the situation.

“Si, ciento diez es aquí.”

I try recalling the tone of Alea's voice on the phone when he gave me this address. No residue of mischief there that I can remember, no elusive mischief come in handy to dissuade filmmakers bearing compliments from abroad. I can only recall his friendly tone and the appointment we had made for one.

“I live in a two story house, by the way, with our part upstairs.”

I have a sick feeling as I scan this neighborhood of mostly two-story houses. The prospect of molesting Habanians during the lunch hour for directions is not a thrilling option at this point. The driver grows impatient looking for a house that clearly doesn't exist. I pay him the three-dollar fare.

The scarred white box I've hauled from California to Miami to Havana to Santiago and back to Havana digs deep into my shoulder as I watch his Fiat haul ass back towards Quinta Avenida. This could be the end of my hopes of meeting the most internationally celebrated of Cuba's many fine film directors.

If you stand in the middle of Calle Cero as I am now, you will see an eerily quiet neighborhood. Though densely packed with houses, there are very few people about. It is mid-day and hot, a time to seek the shelter of rooms cooled by tree cover, if you're lucky, and many different-sized electric fans going at once. This part of Miramar bears with pride the telltale imprint of this city's momentous place in history. Ending at the shoreline of the Caleta de San Lázaro, Calle Cero retains a faded middle-class tranquility of decades long gone by.



Family photographs hang on the walls behind smoky convex glass. A caustic breeze lacerates the dwelling from front to back, strangely uncooled by its proximity to the Straits of Florida.

I hear a man's voice, look towards the front door. All I see is the latter half of someone who's already entered. I hear him speaking in the kitchen with the housekeeper, the sound of packages being turned over to her. Emerging from another door, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea smiles as he approaches the veranda, his hand outstretched.

"Mr. Lorenzo, hello."

His accent is as genteel as his appearance. I stand as he approaches.

"A great pleasure to meet you, Señor Alea."

He pulls up a chair beside me. He is a dignified and strikingly handsome man in his mid-sixties. His hair is gray and close-cropped. His khaki slacks and white cotton shirt are neatly pressed despite the stifling heat. His black Reeboks float in their own shadows on the polished tile floor, make him look frail in the intense fragmented light. During the slightly awkward silence that often accompanies first meetings, Mirtha Ibarra enters from another room. Her smile as welcoming as her husband's, she gives me a kiss on the cheek.

"Bienvenido, DeStefano. Welcome to Havana."



I look around for an open face to bail me out here. A tall man walks a wiry black dog, shakes his head at my rudimentary query.

"¿Dónde está la casa del Señor Tomás Gutiérrez Alea?"

Another man on a balcony ignores me altogether. All at once a man emerges from behind a section of rusted fence. He's carrying an armload of huge dead banana leaves, nods vigorously when I ask him for Señor Alea's house. He points me directly across the street from where I've been standing all this time.

"Se acabó aquí!"

The house is black and white, with the most manicured shrubbery on the block, and the number 105 prominently displayed on the front wall. Moving through a wrought-iron gate, I head up the glossy painted stairs, come face to face with a startled housekeeper mopping the foyer.

"Disculpe, señora. Mi nombre es Lorenzo DeStefano. Yo tengo una cita con Señor Alea. Está aquí?"

She smiles at the tongue-tied visitor.

"El Señor Alea no está. Pero, pase, por favor."

The housekeeper walks ahead, motions towards a table. I set the heavy box down. She leads me towards a veranda shaded by a massive rubber tree and some plumeria. The scent of this flower, as seductive and plentiful in Cuba as in my native Hawai'i, is the latest of the many sensorial links I've been experiencing on this, my first trip to this compelling island. The housekeeper returns to la cocina. I sit at a small table, a clear view of the home's interior before me.

The living room is immaculate but well lived-in. I notice some very fine abstract paintings and a modernist floor sculpture made of mother of pearl.

Mirtha wears her hair in wild brown ringlets, her arms kinetic forces of nature. The serene features of her beautiful face stand out from across the room, familiar to me from her roles in her husband's films. Mirtha Ibarra has a way of occupying a space and making it her own. She does this not with any hint of theatricality but with a realness that has made her one of Cuba's most respected stage and screen actors.

I pass on greetings to them from their close friend, the American film director Randa Haines. A fellow member of the Director's Guild of America, and a recent visitor to Cuba, Randa has kindly sent, a few weeks back, a letter of introduction on my behalf to Titón and Mirtha.

"Ah, Randa." Titón beams. "She is a fine director, and a beautiful person."

Mirtha moves towards a cabinet, returns with a framed color 3x5 of herself with Randa and another American friend. She looks at it for some time as Titón and I keep talking. "Titón" is what Randa said everyone here calls the filmmaker. Though clearly affectionate, I have not asked her or anyone else exactly what it means. Based on the four films of his that I've seen it could mean clever dissembler, savage humorist or fierce visionary.

The housekeeper enters as if on cue with a tray of chilled whiskey. The three of us sit in a semicircle around a table full of mail and magazines, toast each other's health.

"I'm very sorry to have kept you waiting," he says.

"Not to worry. It's a very pleasant place to wait, your veranda. I didn't mean to get here before you."

Mirtha looks to Titón for help with the translation, a duty he performs quite amiably over the next two hours.

"I had expected you to phone me at one, actually."

From the look on his face I must appear very confused.

"But it is perfectly alright," he responds quickly, not wanting to offend.

"So, you arrived in Havana today?"

"At eleven."

"And you found the house with no problem?"



He senses my hesitation.

“No? There was a problem?”

“Actually, I thought on the phone you told me it was number 110.”

I show him the paper I wrote his instructions on. He looks despairingly at Mirtha then back at me.

“I am so very sorry.”

Mirtha looks more confused now than ever. He explains the situation to her in Spanish, which causes her to laugh as he turns back to me.

“Just after hanging up with you I asked myself, did I just tell DeStefano our address was #110 or #105? I remember the thought troubling me for hours after that.”

He leans back in his chair, his fine tapered hands coming to rest on his lap.

“You see, that number, 110, it stays with me from another time. It was the address of a professor of mine when I was young, a special person to me. Sometimes I find myself confusing this number with other numbers I encounter all these years later. Either way, we are happy you found us.”

Tomás Gutiérrez Alea has made twenty films in the past thirty-eight years, among them 1966's *La muerte de un burócrata* (Death of a Bureaucrat), a biting satire on Cuban government bureaucracy as experienced by a young man trying to bury a dead relative. Then there is what is perhaps his most famous film, the edgy 1968 classic of the early post-Revolution era *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (Memories of Underdevelopment), an existential masterpiece of world cinema.

Mirtha first worked with Titón in 1976 on his powerful colonial slave-era drama, *La última cena* (The Last Supper), his admitted favorite among his films, and mine as well.

Mirtha next worked with Titón in 1983 on *Hasta cierto punto* (Up to a Certain Point). At the time of our meeting he is deep into editing *Fresa y chocolate* (Strawberry & Chocolate), a 1993 Miramax release co-starring Mirtha, Jorge Perugorriá and Vladimir Cruz. It will go on to become Cuba's first Academy Award nominee for best foreign film. Titón lays out the basic story for me.

“It is, how do you call it, a black comedy, about the friendship between a prostitute, a homosexual, and a young Fidel loyalist in contemporary Havana.”

Being a film editor myself, I'd hoped to watch Titón at work, but he is done for the day, and I leave for Miami at seven tomorrow morning.

“I work in the editing room from 8:30 to 12:30 every day. The remainder of the day is taken up with my medical treatments, reading and rest.”

Out of politeness I do not inquire further about whatever condition he may have. It is only later that I find out that Titón, because of the cancer he's been battling, is working with a co-director, the fine Cuban filmmaker Juan Carlos Tabio on what will turn out to be Titón's second to the last film.

I see him looking at the white box I have brought. I pull out a pen knife and open it up.

“There's some 16mm editing equipment in here, splicers and rewinds and batteries, a bunch of other things from a list faxed to me by ICAIC.”

Titón's arms rise in graceful unison.



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loved to the terrible difficulty of making films in the current economic climate of Cuba.

“My budgets are usually around \$300,000 for a feature. \$500,000 would be a great epic here. Since there is no hard currency in Cuba now for films, foreign co-productions are essential. My latest film is financed by Spain and Mexico, with Cuban equipment and personnel. This is how it is.”

The housekeeper calls us to lunch. Mirtha touches the back of one of the chairs in the bright, modestly appointed kitchen.

“You sit here please.”

She ladles tangy black bean soup into a bowl for me. Besides a large plate of rice there are salted plantain chips, three strips of marinated flank steak with grilled onions, and a basket of bread. Titón takes half a handful of tablets from several prescription bottles on a table behind him. Gorda, their small white dog, waits devotedly at his feet as he carefully swallows these.

A middle-aged man emerges from inside the house as we're eating, begins a rapid-fire exchange with Titón. Judging from the frequent use of the word “capacitor” I figure the general subject of discussion must relate to something electrical. My tin-ear Spanish picks up that whatever device they're talking about is either a partial or a total loss. The man kisses Mirtha on the cheek, shakes my hand without being introduced, and leaves on a trail of promises to come back soon. Titón explains.

“He is a friend of ours, an excellent mechanic. You see, the air conditioner in my office has gone out of order and there are absolutely no parts to be found to repair it.”

“Can't you buy a new one?”

Titón translates my naïve inquiry for Mirtha. She laughs again. He smiles benevolently.

“No. I'm afraid that is not possible here.”

“Then what'll you do?”

He utters this with a mix of resignation and national pride in the resourcefulness of the Cuban people, still getting things done despite decades of adversity.

By the time I finish my bowl of cherry Jell-O with pineapple and orange wedges, I can see that my host is getting tired. I get ready to say good-bye, ask first to take a photograph of them, for me and for Randa.

“Thank you so much. Our film institute needs many things like these. They will be put to good use, I assure you.”

I hand Mirtha a smaller box wedged inside the gear.

“This one's for both of you.”

Mirtha, obviously pleased, discovers the yellow notepads, pens, pencils, blank audio and videocassettes I and others have put together for them.

“I've also brought some tapes of films of mine, as film editor and director.”

Titón scans each title with great interest.

“You arrive so prepared, Señor Lorenzo. Are all Americans this prepared?”

Heading deeper into the box, Titón and Mirtha unearth staples, paper clips, #10 rubber bands and other basics required for literary creation. By the look on their faces they haven't seen this much scotch tape in years.

Mirtha pours more whiskey for each of us. We toast again, this time with the kind of quietness that close friends do. These two fine artists have made me feel instantly at home. Mirtha gently rests her hand on her husband's.

“Twenty years we have been together.”

She casts an impatient look his way.

“And my first film with him comes eight long years after we met.”

She seems proud of herself for having stuck it out so long. Waiting eight years for her man to find the role most suited to her could not have been easy. Maybe he was afraid to expose someone he



Two weeks before Titón's death I'd finally reached him by phone after several frustrating attempts. I listened in anticipation to the double rings, separated by heavy static. Mirtha finally answered just before I was going to hang it up. It was good to hear her voice, though she seemed tired, worn down. She passed the phone to Titón. His voice was noticeably weaker but still quite like itself.

"Good to hear from you, Lorenzo. I am not so well right now. I have to be in this wheelchair. Mirtha and I are writing a script together, though, which keeps me busy."

I'm looking at this picture now, nearly twenty-two years after that visit in 1993. Soon it will be April 16, 2015, the 19th anniversary of Titón's death.

I received a call from Randa Haines on the morning of that day in 1996, the kind of call you know is coming but have no wish to receive.

"Titón died this morning around four a.m. our time."

I had known for the past several months that he had been gravely ill, his cancer relentlessly on the march. The last time Randa and I had seen him was in Los Angeles in the spring of '94, when we'd hosted he and Mirtha on their trip to that year's Academy Awards, where *Fresa y Chocolate* was the first Cuban film ever nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language film.

I asked if there was anything I could do, though we both knew there was not. I found myself getting very emotional as I listened to him speak the last words I was likely to hear from him. All I could think to tell him was how much understanding I felt he'd brought to the world through his films. There is this great love and tolerance for people shining through them, the same love that's coming back to him now in spades. He seemed to like that thought. Maybe he was just being polite. We said good-bye and I hung up first. No need for him to hear me cry.

Randa barely keeps it together on the phone as she shares a letter with me, to be read at Titón's funeral in Havana in two days.

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

"We grieve with the family of the brilliant Cuban filmmaker Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and all the people of Cuba at the loss of such an esteemed artist, excellent friend and unforgettable comrade. Titón will remain alive and present for everyone in the endless wealth of ideas that flow from each one of the images he created. In Titón's life is the truth of Jose Marti's saying, 'Death is not real if one has accomplished his life's work well.'"



Thinking now of meeting Titón and Mirtha those many years ago, I realize that the visceral impact Cuba and its people had on me has never faded. Back into the routines of my own life and work, familiar landscapes quiver with a kind of vague impermanence. As I'm driving on the freeways of California, the sun bursts from behind a building, marks me in its rays, rays not half as intense as those that shine on lovely Miramar. Pulled back to that Caribbean whiteness, I recall being surprised when Titón offered to walk me down at the end of our visit. He seemed weaker than he was a mere two hours ago. Waiting on the still deserted street, he let Gorda off her leash, kept himself turned away from the sun.

"It is not so good for me anymore," he'd lamented.

We both heard the taxi before we saw it approaching.

"Thank you for coming all this way to see me, DeStefano, and for all the beautiful things you have brought to us today."

"I appreciate you and Mirtha taking the time to meet me."

"Perhaps you will return in December for the Film Festival?"

"I'd really like to try. Thank you very much."

He shook my hand, waved to me once before turning away.

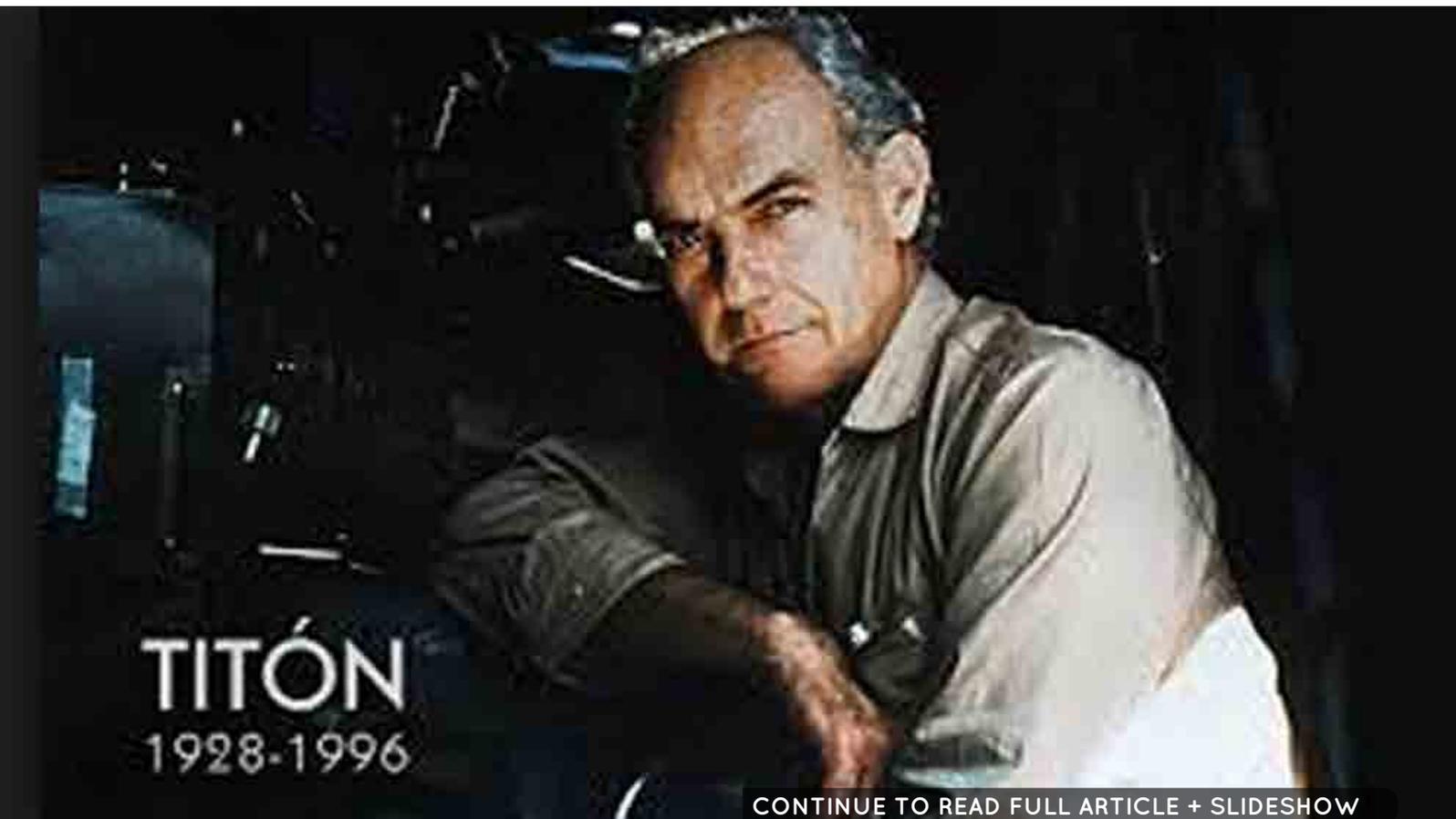
"Until December then, Lorenzo."

The cab arrived. I got into the same Fiat that brought me here, though the driver had changed. Pulling away, I looked through the back window, saw Titón turning towards the Sierra Maestra Hotel. He was staring at the mountainous pile of air conditioners, just waiting there. I saw his shoulders rise to their true stature for a moment, as if in expectation of the cool relief awaiting him. When he turned back towards his house his pace was slow but absolutely sure. As my ride neared the intersection of Quinta Avenida, the last image I had of Titón was of him climbing the painted concrete stairs to número 105, Calle Cero, Gorda trailing awkwardly behind him.

Lorenzo DeStefano

Originally from Honolulu, Hawaii, Lorenzo DeStefano is a director member of the Directors Guild of America. "Los Zafiros-Music from the Edge of Time" is his multi-award-winning music feature about the Beatles of 1960s Cuba (www.loszafirosfilm.com). He is currently in production on the feature documentary "Rachel Flowers-Hearing is Believing" about a prodigiously talented young musician and composer in California who has been blind since birth (www.rachelflowersfilm.com). Visit www.lorenzodestefano.com to learn more about his work as a filmmaker, writer and photographer.

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Cathedral in Old Havana

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CUBA CONFERENCES AND CULTURAL TOURS

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Cuba Conferences and Cultural Tours is a tour server made up of consultants with a difference. Bonnie Eccles and Lisa Makarchuk, both retired teachers and alumni of the University of Toronto, have decades of travel experience and now specialize in conferences, colloquiums, seminars, courses and cultural tours to Cuba. Bonnie has travelled around the world and has over twenty years of experience with various travel agencies in planning trips to different parts of the world. Lisa has spent a total of nine years in Cuba in various capacities; she has established contacts which are valuable in answering the needs of special interest groups travelling to Cuba and Cuba Conferences is in a unique position to set up contacts, organize seminars with colleagues, or customize tours. Lisa's teaching experience was in secondary and elementary schools. She has also taught law and legal procedures at Shaw Business Colleges and Centennial College and was a resource person on university tours to Cuba.

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La Marca: Havana's first tattoo parlor

by María Montes

Being a habitu e of Habana Vieja is quite different from just passing through: I've been finding that out for the last few months. Wandering the streets becomes a kind of addiction, looking at the small souvenir shops, women dressed in Colonial-style costumes, living statues who are getting more perfect and more amazing, the clatter of stilt-walkers and the pigeons in San Francisco Square. And on Obrap a Street, in the midst of so many maraca and bongo peddlers, fans decorated with Cuban flags, t-shirts printed with the image of Che and ladies selling their crocheted wares, a place that has taken on the search for *cubania*... no prejudices, no hoopla.

It's called *La Marca*. That's where I first met skinny, curly-haired Robertiko, with his sleeveless t-shirt showing off this tattooed shoulders. He was sitting on the floor, at the door, with an attitude, the poster-boy for the fact that this was a tattoo parlor. I stop and ask some questions. They tell me the place is a studio and a gallery that opened last January and that has been doing well. First I talk to Dione and she makes the arrangements for the interview that I now feel is a must. I am met in the large and well-lit reception area that has an art exhibition on its walls. On one of the walls, Mauro is putting the finishing touches on a lovely mural filled with elephants. Near the entrance, close to the floor, there are some drawings made by the community's children who were invited to learn



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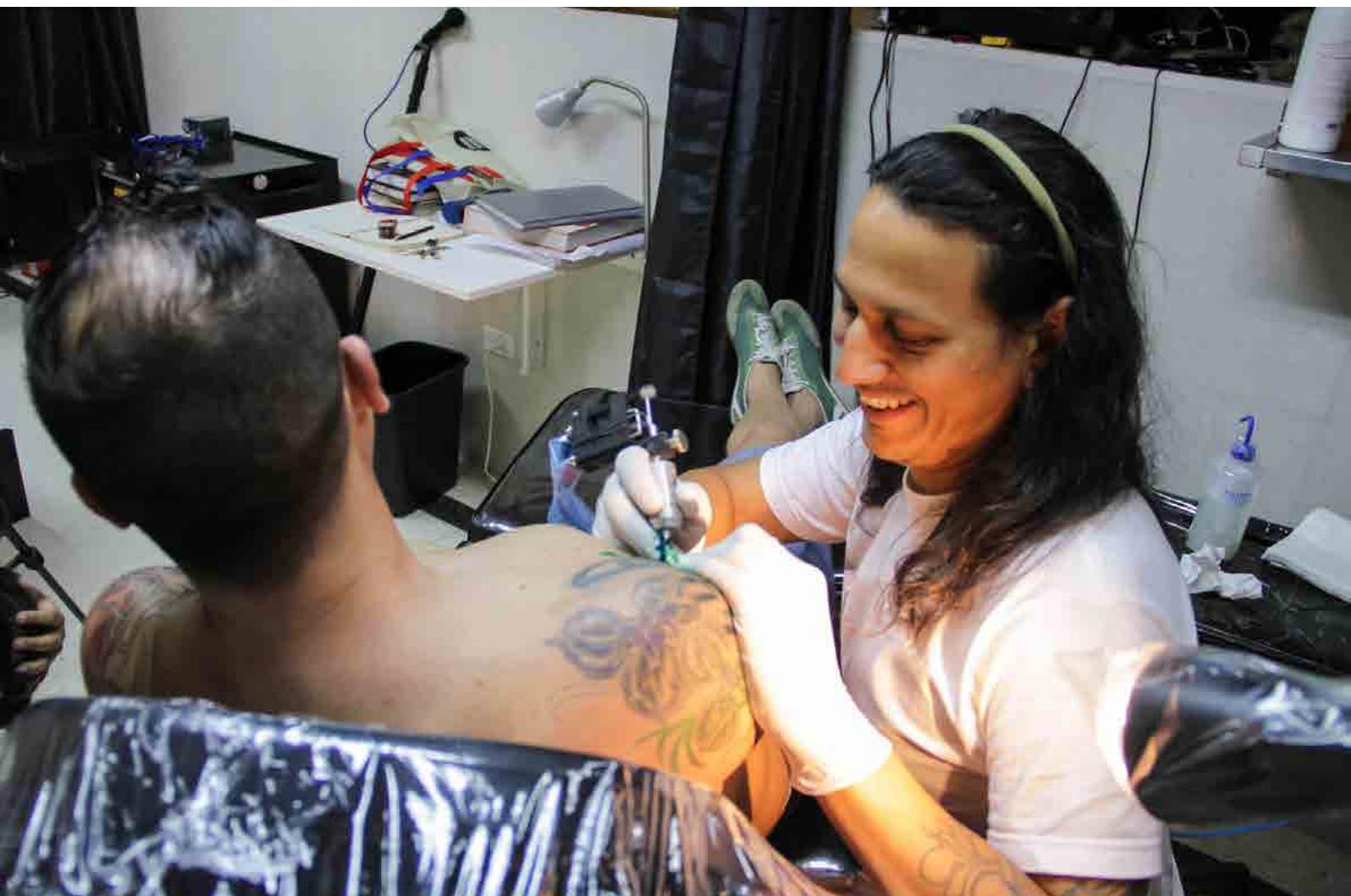
about mural painting and to do one themselves. Just above that are some posters for the Dulce Dolor (Sweet Pain) exhibition practically being evicted by Mauro's pachyderms. In a corner, a statue of Our Lady of Regla and, holding a wooden trunk decorated with shell-eyes, the house *elegguá* with an omnipresent offering of sweets and candies is helping to open the way for this project that is primarily seeking to validate tattooing as an art form, from a new, genuinely Cuban perspective.

After coming through the inner doorway separating the gallery from the studio, Leo started to fill me in. A spiral staircase takes you up to the tattoo salon. Everything is spotless here. There are three black chairs separated by curtains to provide some privacy for the customers. Meanwhile, I am looking at the walls with their demonstration of everything that is being done here and more. There are photos of finished tattoos, sketches for plans and shelves with thick volumes of drawings of flowers, birds and butterflies. There are faces, skeletons, monsters, fantasy animals. There are photos of Leo's little girls and the daughter of Ailed Duarte, mother, wife, owner and queen of the place that smells of ink and disinfectant.

Leo chats while he fills a woman's hip with color. The precision with which he works is impressive; it is a profession that leaves no room for mistakes.

He tells us about responsibility and how *La Marca* looks after their clients' health. The sterilization room is separate from the studio and the water is thrown out after every client. *La Marca* will not tattoo anybody under the age of 18, not just as a mere legality, but because at that age it is difficult to appreciate the permanence of placing an indelible series of marks on your body that you are going to have all your life. That's why Leo won't tattoo anybody who seems to be unsure, those who don't really know what they want. Every job involves a preliminary process where the idea brought in by the client is discussed, negotiated and recreated in the artist's style so that the two of them, tattooer and tattooed, end up happy and satisfied with the final product. They aim to have every job be unique, unrepeatable, personal and authentic.

I am almost convinced. I who am so conventional and hate taking any risks. I'm almost thinking about the image I would like to have tattooed on my body. Almost unconsciously I'm looking for a little spot where I could place a mark, my mark, or better still, the mark of *La Marca* on my still unmarked skin. Like David is doing over there on the third chair. He is a visual artist who has decided to place his art on skin instead of on a canvas. Besides the act of creation, he also enjoys the art of conversation since the relationship one has with one's tattooer is



akin to that of a confessor. Clients have told him all kinds of stories. It's a curious fact, not seen every day, but David is a tattoo artist without tattoos. He has decided to take his time and work on a design that is going to decorate his skin—he wants to be one hundred percent sure.

As I write this article I am overcome by the intoxication of the place and its charm. I am again thinking that I might get a tattoo, invisible to others, on the palm of my hand, on a foot, something very tiny. But in the meantime, I invite you to visit *La Marca*. The place and its tattoo artists has imbued me with a rare fascination thanks to their sincerity and enterprise. Maybe I'll never decide to get a tattoo, but who knows? Maybe I'll decide to get one on my big toe!

THE CREW

Ailed Duarte: A+ in the History of Tattoos and Body Art in Cuba. She is the owner of *La Marca*, the leader of the group, responsible for getting materials and for the sense of order and progress. Leo is her husband. She has many tattoos.

Leo Canosa: Father of two little girls, a life-long tattoo artist with a great reputation. He comes highly recommended. His dream is that one day tattooing will gain its own special niche on this Island. He has even more tattoos than Ailed.

Robertiko Ramos: Designs clothes, stage sets, posters, tattoos and whatever comes around. He is responsible for Culture in *La Marca*—he's the guy you have to talk to if you want to show your work there. He's not easy but he is honest. Loads of tattoos, some of which still require finishing up.

Mauro Coca: Always dreamed about becoming a tattoo artist, nothing else. He is 23 years old and has earned a place in the union. Every day he draws and tattoos better. He is going to create the Save the Elephants Foundation. He is about to become a father.

Dione: Luckily for *La Marca*, she is in charge of Public Relations. Nobody can compete with her smile, and her patience is legendary here. Plus, she makes a mean cup of coffee! She has tattoos everywhere.

Martamar77: Girl looking for boy for a non-commitment: 1.56, dark-haired, slim. She doesn't know how to walk on high heels. She is a radical feminist. She says she is a journalist and a community manager and that's where most of her time is spent. Active collaborator in *La Marca*, she has just been tattooed and can't wait to get more.

David: *La Marca* tattoo artist. He still isn't official because he practically arrived yesterday but he has studied in all the schools and knows all the techniques. He's never been tattooed. His skin is black and his eyes are kind (author's note).

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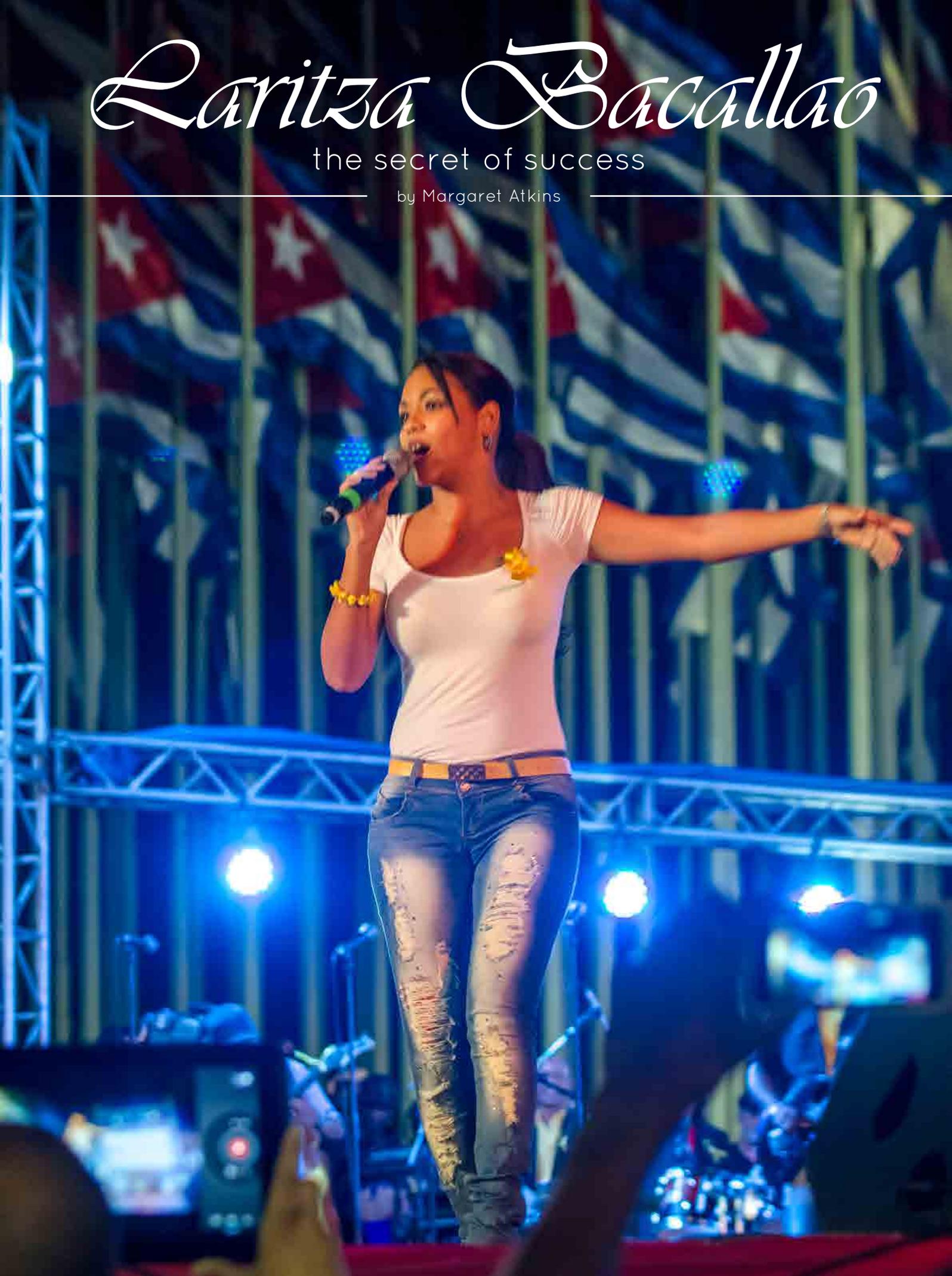


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Laritza Bacallao

the secret of success

by Margaret Atkins





Laritza is a lovely young Cuban woman who has been an artist for 20 of her 27 years. She is the daughter and grand-daughter of musicians. She was born to sing and it was something she was aware of from the very first time she got up on a stage. That's why she has no regrets about a "lost" childhood spent at rehearsals, touring and doing shows. She always knew what she wanted and her path was clearly laid out. At the age of ten she had already recorded with the emblematic Aragon Band with which both her father and grand-father had been singers. (Unfortunately this CD was never released....maybe someday....) She gained her professional experience as a performer with the Aragon Band, a child among adults. Her first trip to Japan is a bitter-sweet memory because she remembers almost starving to death: her inexperienced palate wasn't able to get used to the strange tastes of Asian cuisine. Then she visited Venezuela, again with the Aragon group. She took formal musical training and graduated as a pianist. When she was 18, she did a solo tour of Germany and subsequently spent a year in Italy under contract for a version of Bizet's "Carmen", playing a part specially created for her. Then she returned to Cuba for a holiday but made the decision to stay on the Island to launch a solo career from her origins.

Once she was established in Cuba, Barbarito Torres, one of the Buena Vista Social Club stars, invited her to work with him and Osmani Espinosa wrote some songs for her that are going to be a permanent part of the Cuban musical tapestry; the success of "Mi Carnaval" and "Suenan los Tambores" clearly bear witness to that statement. She moved on to the PMM music project (the initials stand for *Por un Mundo Mejor...For a Better World*), taping videos, creating her own group and recording an album called *Solo se vive una vez* including songs by Osmani Espinosa and Martin Freddy along with a *bachata* by the very talented Descemer Bueno.

Laritza is unpretentious, wears hardly any makeup and dresses in form-fitting clothes that play up her gorgeous figure. Absent are the sparkles and sequins that are practically *de rigueur* for some Cuban artists. This naturalness in the midst of a world infested with fakes is a virtue in itself, but it is not her only strong suit. She has a powerful voice and a captivating stage presence, attracting men and women, children and their grandparents. She has triumphed in Cuba, an island that has more music than seawater and where the most popular singers are usually men. Laritza is all over the place: on the street, in the buses, in homes, on the radio and on TV. This *mulata* is funny, adores pasta, pizza and sleeping. When she sings, she is a match for anybody else on stage with her. She is happy in her relationship and hopes to have a baby as soon as the time is right.



As we leave the place where she rehearses and where we did this interview, she runs into a group of teenagers who recognize her. They all want to take photos and they approach her with their cell phones in hand. Laritza is all smiles and patiently submits to the impromptu photo session that seems to go on forever. "I need a hamburger," she says. That's about all she has time to eat as she dashes off to tape a TV show. This is the life she has chosen and she loves it. She goes through life with joy, holding the key to success: to always be herself, a young, lovely Cuban woman.



[CONTINUE TO READ FULL ARTICLE + SLIDESHOW](#)

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The Gran Torneo de Cuba Golf 2015

For Mark Twain, golf was famously a good walk ruined. For me I generally feel the same about golf competitions, why bother when you can simply play with friends with a cooler full of beer when you want with no stress. Yet since the Montecristo (and formerly Essencia Cup) started a few years ago every April, I not only find myself making the trek out to Varadero but loving it.

The Varadero course stands at 6,856 yards, has a par of 72 and is beautifully maintained. Stylistically think beachfront links along a gorgeous coastline mixed with tropical parkland and Florida lakes. Re-designed by Canadian Les Furber, the two loops of nine-holes are challenging yet pretty fair. The competition itself is well organized, with good prizes, the weather at this time of year is great and with interesting playing companions, what's not to like other than the invariable shank off the first, slice on the second, three put on the fourth...

The tournament will take place in a three-round period, one round for practice and two rounds of competition that will total the final result of each player. Official Golf rules will prevail as well as the local rules of the Varadero Golf Club. A handicap certificate or any other official document recognized by the Golf Federation or Golf Club (the last 10 results of 18-hole golf rounds) is required.

DETAILS:

The competitors will be grouped in three categories as follows:

- Open 1st Category:** Medalplay
- Open 2nd category:** Stableford
- Ladies Category:** Stableford



Mansion Xanadu, Varadero



Thursday April 9

7AM-6PM	Registration at Pro-Shop Practice round
7PM	Welcome cocktail Meeting for information and rules

Friday April 10

6:30-8:50AM	Practice on the Driving Range
7-9AM	1st competition round
7PM	Social gathering

Saturday April 11

6:30-8:50AM	Practice on the Driving Range
7-9AM	1st competition round Qualifying awards
6PM	Awards Ceremony
7PM	Gala Dinner

AWARDS:

Category	Handicap		Trophy
Open 1st Category	0	12	1st place 2nd place
Open 2nd Category	13	24	1st place 2nd Place
Ladies Category	0	30	1st place 2nd Place
Best Row			Trophy

Josone park, Varadero



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Nazdarovie CA★5+

SOVIET

Well designed Soviet décor, excellent food & good service.

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☎(+53) 7-860-2947

San Cristóbal CA★5

CUBAN/CREOLE

Deservedly popular. Consistently great food. Kitsch décor.

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☎(+53) 7-860-9109

Bella Ciao CA★4+

HOMELY ITALIAN

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INTERNATIONAL

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La Guarida

www.la guarida.com

CA★5+

CA TOP PICK



Style of food Contemporary fusion

Cost Expensive

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for Authentic, charming and intimate atmosphere in Cuba's best known restaurant. Great food, professional. Classy.

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El Litoral

CA★5+

CA TOP PICK



Style of food International

Cost Expensive

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for Quality décor, good service and great food. Best new place recently opened.

Don't Miss Drinking a cocktail at sunset watching the world go by on the Malecón

Malecón #161 e/ K y L, Vedado.

☎ (+53) 7-830-2201

Nazdarovie

CA★5+

CA TOP PICK



Style of food Soviet

Cost Moderate

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for Getting a flavor of Cuban-Soviet history along with babuska's traditional dishes in a classy locale.

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Malecon #25 3rd floor e/ Prado y Carcel, Centro Habana

☎ (+53) 7-860-2947

Iván Chef Justo

CA★5+

CA TOP PICK



Style of food Spanish

Cost Expensive

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for Spectacular innovative food. Light and airy place where it always seems to feel like Springtime.

Don't Miss The lightly spiced grilled mahi-mahi served with organic tomato relish. Try the suckling pig and stay for the cuatro leches.

Aguacate #9, Esq. Chacón, Habana Vieja.

☎ (+53) 7-863-9697 / (+53) 5-343-8540

La California

CA★5

CA TOP PICK



Style of food Cuban-Creole/International

Cost Moderate

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for Beautiful C19 colonial building. Popular place with quality food and great service. Love the fresh pastas.

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Calle Crespo #55 e/ San Lázaro y Refugio, Centro Habana

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Casa Miglis

CA★5

CA TOP PICK



www.casamiglis.com

Style of food Swedish-Cuban fusion

Cost Expensive

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for The beautifully designed interior, warm ambience and Miglis's personality create the feeling of an oasis in Central Havana.

Don't Miss Chatting with Mr Miglis. The Skaargan prawns, beef Chilli and lingonberries.

Lealtad #120 e/ Ánimas y Lagunas, Centro Habana

☎ (+53) 7-864-1486

Habana Mía 7

CA★5

CA TOP PICK



Style of food International gourmet

Cost Moderate

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for Stylish and fresh décor give a Mediterranean feel for long endless summer nights. Excellent food and service.

Don't miss Watching the world go by on the lovely terrace overlooking the ocean.

Paseo #7 altos e/ 1ra y 3ra, Vedado

☎ (+53) 7-830-2287

www.habanamia7.com

Santy

CA★5

CA TOP PICK



Style of food Sushi

Cost Moderate

Type of place Private (Paladar)

Food ★★★★★

Ambience ★★★★★★

Service ★★★★★

Value ★★★★★

Best for Fabulous sushi, wonderful ambience overlooking fishing boats heading out to sea. World class.

Don't miss Getting a reservation here.

Calle 240A #3023 esq. 3raC, Jaimanitas

☎ (+53) 5-286-7039



Style of food Experimental fusion
Cost Expensive
Type of place Private (Paladar)
Food ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Service ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Interesting menu, beautiful building with great décor and service.

Don't miss Dinner on the breezy terrace during summer.

Calle 5ta e/ Paseo y 2, Vedado
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 atelierdedecuba@yahoo.es

La Casa



Style of food International/sushi
Cost Expensive
Type of place Private (Paladar)
Food ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★
Service ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Warm hospitality and openness from the four generations of the Robaina family. Quality food.

Don't miss Thursday night sushi night. The Piña Colada.

Calle 30 #865 e/ 26 y 41, Nuevo Vedado.
 ☎ (+53) 7-881-7000
 alerobaina@restaurantelacasacuba.com

Otramanera



Style of food International
Cost Moderate
Type of place Private (Paladar)
Food ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Service ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Beautiful modern décor and good food.

Don't miss Pork rack of ribs in honey. Sweet & sour sauce and grilled pineapple

Calle 35 #1810 e/ 20 y 41, Playa
 ☎ (+53) 7-203-8315
 otramaneralahabana@gmail.com
 reservas@otramaneralahabana.com

Opera



Style of food International
Cost Moderate
Type of place Private (Paladar)
Food ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Ambience ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Service ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Best for Homely & Intimate environment Quality food in a beautiful setting.

Don't miss Fresh pasta, vegetarian dishes and quail.

Calle 5ta #204 e/ E y F, Vedado
 ☎ (+53) 5-263-1632 / (+53) 8-31-2255



LA GUARIDA

'This remains the island's best restaurant, combining a sophisticated and hip ambience with solid food preparation'

Cigar Aficionado

"The greatest and most magical is La Guarida, so magical that it is tempting to protect it by withholding its address..."

..... **The Guardian**

Havana's legendary paladar just got better with the opening of a new cocktail terrace that offers fabulous views, a funky vibe and Havana's best bartenders.



Concordia #4-18 e/ Gervasio y Escobar, Centro Habana / (+53) 7-866-9047

OPERA

RESTAURANTE

OP
E
R
a

- ★ *Best for Homely & Intimate enviroment*
- ★ *Quality food in a beautiful setting*
- ★ *Don't miss: Fresh pasta, vegetarian dishes and quail*

Dinner: 8:00 PM - 12:00 AM

Lunch by reservation only

Closed on Tuesday

Address: Calle 5ta No. 204 e/ E y F. Vedado

Tel: 831 2255 Cel: 52631632

opera.cuba@gmail.com



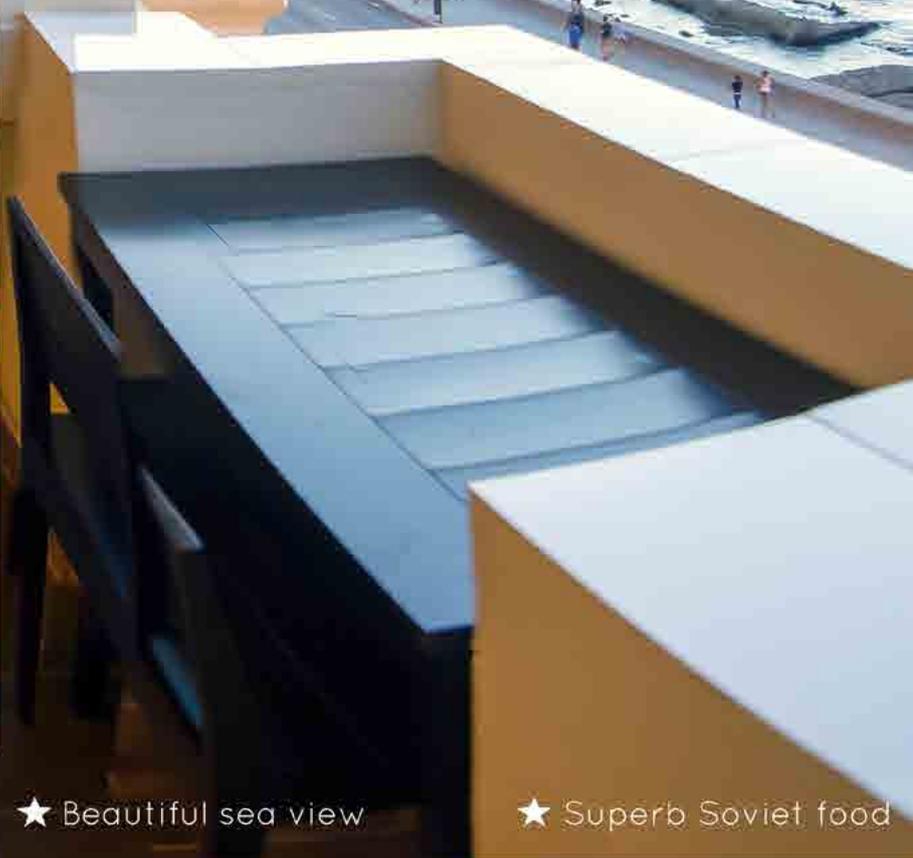
NAZDAROVIE



Authentic Soviet restaurant overlooking the Malecón

Pelmeni, goluptsi, solianka, borscht, blini, stroganoff and vareiniki

Staffed by the Soviet women who stayed in Cuba & their sons & daughters



★ Authentic Soviet style

★ Beautiful sea view

★ Superb Soviet food

Malecón #25, 3rd floor
e/ Prado y Cárcel, Centro Habana

(+53) 7-860-2947

www.nazdarovie-havana.com

Otramanera

— LA HABANA —

OM is Otramanera: “another way”

Another way of understanding and enjoying gastronomy in a unique locale where each detail is important.

A restaurant that adapts to market availability and to the seasons, serving fresh quality products.



Calle 35 #1810 e/ 20 y 41, Playa / (+53) 7-203-8315
otramaneralahabana@gmail.com / reservas@otramaneralahabana.com

Havana's best Bars & Clubs

Traditional Bars

El Floridita CA★4+

Hemingway's daiquiri bar. Touristy but always full of life. Great cocktails.

Obispo #557 esq. a Monserrate, Habana Vieja

☎(+53) 7-867-1299

Factoría Plaza Vieja CA★5

Microbrewery. Serves ice chilled bong of light locally brewed beer.

San Ignacio esq. a Muralla, Plaza Vieja, Habana Vieja

☎(+53) 7-866-4453

Sloppy Joe's Bar CA★4+

Recently (beautifully) renovated. Full of history. Popular. Lacks a little 'grime'.

Ánimas esq. a Zulueta, Habana Vieja

☎(+53) 7-866-7157

Cervecería CA★5+

ANTIGUO ALMACÉN DE LA MADERA Y EL TABACO

Microbrewery located overlooking the restored docks. Simply brilliant.

Avenida del Puerto y San Ignacio, La Habana Vieja

Contemporary Bars

El Cocinero CA★5+

Fabulous rooftop setting, great service, cool vibe.

Calle 26 e/ 11 y 13, Vedado

☎(+53) 7-832-2355

Espacios CA★5-

Laid back contemporary bar with a real buzz in the back beer-garden.

Calle 10 #510, e/ 5ta y 31, Miramar

☎(+53) 7-836-3031

TaBARish CA★5

A comfortable place to chat / hang out with your friends. Great service.

Calle 20 #503, e/ 5ta y 7ma.

☎(+53) 7-202-9188

Fábrica de Arte CA★5+

X Alfonso's new cultural center. Great concerts, funky young scene.

Calle 26 e/ 11 y 13, Vedado (next to the Puente de Hierro)

☎(+53) 5-329-6325
www.facebook.com/fabrica.deartecubano

Contemporary bars/clubs

Don Cangrejo CA★4+

Love it/hate it—this is the oldest Friday night party place and is still going strong. Outdoor by the sea.

Ave. 1ra e/ 16 & 18, Miramar

☎(+53) 7-204-3837

Kpricho CA★4

Über modern and stylish indoor bar/club. Miami style crowd and attitude.

Calle 94 #110 e/ 1ra y 3ra, Miramar

☎(+53) 7-206-4167

Up & Down CA★5

From the team that brought you Sangri-La. Attracting a young party crowd, very popular. Take a coat.

Calle 3ra y B, Vedado

Sangri-La CA★5

For the cool kids. Basement bar/club which gets packed at weekends.

Ave. 21 e/ 36 y 42, Miramar

☎(+53) 7-264-8343

Other

Meliá Sports Bar CA★4

Big-screen sports-bar in modern outdoor terrace. Good for sports and live music.

Meliá Habana Hotel
Ave. 3ra e/ 76 y 80, Miramar

☎(+53) 7-204-8500

El Gato Tuerto CA★4+

Late night place to hear fabulous bolero singers. Can get smoky.

Calle O e/ 17 y 19, Vedado

☎(+53) 7-833-2224

El Tocatoro CA★4+

Expat favorite hangout. Small indoor bar with live music and eclectic clientele.

Calle 18 e/ 3ra y 5ta, Miramar

Bertolt Brecht CA★5

Think MTV Unplugged. Hip, funky and unique with an artsy Cuban crowd.

Calle 13 e/ I y J, Vedado

☎(+53) 7-830-1354

Gay-friendly

Cabaret Las Vegas CA★4

Can get dark and smoky but great drag show (11pm) from Divino—one of Cuba's most accomplished drag acts.

Infanta #104 e/ 25 y 27, Vedado.

☎(+53) 7-870-7939

Humboldt 52 CA★5

One of the hottest venues for gay nightlife in Havana at present.

Humboldt #52 e/ Infanta y Hospital, Centro Habana.

☎(+53) 5-330-2989

Fashion Bar Havana CA★5

A superb example of queer class meets camp, accompanied by a fantastic floor show.

San Juan de Dios, esq. a Aguacate, Habana Vieja

☎(+53) 7-867-1676

Café Bar Mádri gal CA★4

Pop décor, fancy cocktails, and the staff's supercilious attitude, this is a gathering spot for all types of folks.

Calle 17 #809 e/ 2 y 4, Vedado

☎(+53) 7-831-2433

Bertolt Brecht

CA★5 CA TOP PICK ★



CONTEMPORARY BAR/CLUBS

Ambience	★★★★★
Popularity	★★★★★
Entertainment	★★★★★
Service & drinks	★★★

Best for Hanging out with hip & funky Cubans who like their live music.

Don't Miss Interactivo playing on a Wednesday evening.

Calle 13 e/ I y J, Vedado
☎ (+53) 7-830-1354

Espacios

CA★5- CA TOP PICK ★



CONTEMPORARY BAR

Ambience	★★★★★
Popularity	★★★★★
Entertainment	★★★
Service & drinks	★★★★★

Best for Laid back lounge atmosphere in the garden area which often has live music. Good turnover of people.

Don't Miss Ray Fernandez, Tony Avila, Yasek Mazano playing live sets in the garden.

Calle 10 #510 e/ 5ta y 31, Miramar
☎ (+53) 7-202-2921

Sangri-La

CA★5+ CA TOP PICK ★



CONTEMPORARY BAR/CLUB

Ambience	★★★★★
Popularity	★★★★★
Entertainment	★★★★
Service & drinks	★★★★★

Best for Hanging out with the cool kids on the Havana Farundula in the most popular bar/club.

Don't Miss The best gin and tonic in Havana.

Ave. 21 e/ 36 y 42, Miramar
☎ (+53) 5-264-8343

Bolabana

CA★5 CA TOP PICK ★



CONTEMPORARY

Ambience	★★★★
Popularity	★★★★★
Entertainment	★★★★★
Service & drinks	★★★★

Best for Trendy new location near Salón Rosado de la Tropical

Don't Miss Hipsters meet the Havana Farándula

Calle 39 esq. 50, Playa

Humboldt 52

CA★5 CA TOP PICK ★

GAY FRIENDLY



Ambience	★★★★
Popularity	★★★★★
Entertainment	★★★★★
Service & drinks	★★★★

Best for Hot staff, comfortable setting, and welcoming vibe at Havana's first full-time, openly-gay bar

Don't Miss The disco ball, a talented opera duo performing Wednesdays and karaoke and drag performances other days of the week

Humboldt #52 e/ Infanta y Hospital, Centro Habana.

☎ (+53) 5-330-2989

Fábrica de Arte

CA★5+ CA TOP PICK ★

CONTEMPORARY BAR



Ambience	★★★★★
Popularity	★★★★★
Entertainment	★★★★★
Service & drinks	★★★

Best for X Alfonso's superb new cultural center has something for everyone

Don't Miss Ne pas manquer Les meilleurs musiciens cubains

Calle 26 e/ 11 y 13, Vedado (next to the Puente de Hierro)

Fashion Bar Havana

CA★5 CA TOP PICK ★

GAY-FRIENDLY



Ambience	★★★★
Popularity	★★★★
Entertainment	★★★★★
Service & drinks	★★★

Best for A superb example of queer class meets camp, accompanied by a fantastic floor show.

Don't Miss The staff performing after 11pm

San Juan de Dios, esq. a Aguacate, Habana Vieja

☎ (+53) 7-867-1676

TaBARish

CA★5 CA TOP PICK ★

CONTEMPORARY BAR/CLUB



Ambience	★★★★★
Popularity	★★★★
Entertainment	★★★★★
Service & drinks	★★★★★

Best for A comfortable place to chat / hang out with your friends. Great service.

Don't Miss The homemade Russian soup - just like Matushka makes it.

Calle 20 #503, e/ 5ta y 7ma.

☎ (+53) 7-202-9188



Havana's best live music venues

Concert venues

Karl Marx Theatre

CA★5

World class musicians perform prestigious concerts in Cuba's best equipped venue.

Calle 1ra esq. a 10, Miramar
☎(+53) 7-203-0801

Basílica San Francisco de Asís

CA★5

A truly beautiful church, which regularly hosts fabulous classical music concerts.

Oficios y Amargura, Plaza de San Francisco de Asís, Habana Vieja

Fábrica de Arte

CA★5

X Alfonso's new cultural center. Great concerts inside (small and funky) and outside (large and popular!).

Calle 26 e/ 11 y 13, Vedado (next to the Puente de Hierro)

Sala Covarrubias

CA★5

TEATRO NACIONAL

Recently renovated, one of Cuba's most prestigious venues for a multitude of events.

Paseo y 39, Plaza de la Revolución.

Jazz

Café Jazz Miramar

CA★4+

Clean, modern and atmospheric. Where Cuba's best musicians jam and improvise.

Cine Teatro Miramar
10:30pm - 2am
Ave. 5ta esq. a 94, Miramar

Jazz Café

CA★4

A staple of Havana's jazz scene, the best jazz players perform here. Somewhat cold atmosphere-wise.

Galerías de Paseo
Ave. 1ra e/ Paseo y A, Vedado

Privé Lounge

CA★5+

Small and intimate lounge club with great acoustics and beautiful decor. Jazz groups play Sunday night.

Calle 88A #306 e/ 3ra y 3raA, Miramar
☎(+53) 7-209-2719

La Zorra y el Cuervo

CA★5

Intimate and atmospheric, this basement jazz club, which you enter through a red telephone box, is Cuba's most famous.

Calle 23 e/ N y O, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-833-2402

Salsa/Timba

Café Cantante Mi Habana

CA★4

Attracts the best Cuban musicians. Recently renovated with an excellent new sound system.

Ave. Paseo esq. a 39, Plaza de la Revolución
☎(+53) 7-878-4273

Casa de la Música

CA★4

CENTRO HABANA

A little rough around the edges but spacious. For better or worse, this is ground zero for the best in Cuban salsa.

Galiano e/ Neptuno y Concordia, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-860-8296/4165

Casa de la Música

CA★4

MIRAMAR

Smaller and more up-market than its newer twin in Centro Habana. An institution in the Havana salsa scene.

Calle 20 esq. a 35, Miramar
☎(+53) 7-204-0447

Salón Rosado de la Tropical

CA★5

The legendary beer garden where Arsenio tore it up. Look for a salsa/timba gig on a Sat night and a Sun matinee.

Ave. 41 esq. a 46, Playa
Times: varies wildly
☎(+53) 7-203-5322

Contemporary

Café Teatro Bertolt Brecht

CA★5

Think MTV Unplugged when musicians play. Hip, funky and unique with an artsy Cuban crowd.

Calle 13 e/ I y J, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-830-1354

Don Cangrejo

CA★4+

Love it/hate it—this is the oldest Friday night party place and is still going strong. Outdoor by the sea.

Ave. 1ra e/ 16 y 18, Miramar
☎(+53) 7-204-3837

El Sauce

CA★5-

Great outdoor concert venue to hear the best in contemporary & Nueva Trova live in concert.

Ave. 9na #12015 e/ 120 y 130, Playa
☎(+53) 7-204-6428

Teatro de Bellas Artes

CA★4+

Small intimate venue inside Cuba's most prestigious arts museum. Modern.

Trocadero e/ Zulueta y Monserrate, Habana Vieja.

Trova & traditional

Barbaram Pepito's Bar

CA★4+

Some of the best Cuban Nueva Trova musicians perform in this small and intimate environment.

Calle 26 esq. a Ave. del Zoológico, Nuevo Vedado
☎(+53) 7-881-1808

Gato Tuerto

CA★4+

Late night place to hear fabulous bolero singers. Can get smoky.

Calle O entre 17 y 19, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-833-2224

Legendarios de Guajirito

CA★5

See Buena Vista Social Club musicians still performing nightly from 9pm. Touristy but fabulous.

Zulueta #660 e/ Apodaca y Gloria, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-861-7761

Salón 1930 'Compay Segundo'

CA★4+

Buena Vista Social Club style set in the grand Hotel Nacional.

Hotel Nacional
Calle O esq. a 21, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-835-3896

Havana's Best Hotels



Hotel Nacional de Cuba

Simply the best...

Iberostar Parque Central CA★5+
Luxury hotel overlooking Parque Central
Neptuno e/ Prado y Zulueta, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-860-6627

Santa Isabel CA★5+
Luxurious historic mansion facing Plaza de Armas
Narciso López, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-860-8201

Saratoga CA★5+
Stunning view from roof-top pool. Beautiful décor.
Paseo del Prado #603 esq. a Dragones, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-860-8201

Terral CA★5
Wonderful ocean front location. Newly renovated.
Malecón esq. a Lealtad, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-862-8061

Boutique Hotels in Old Havana

Florida CA★5
Beautifully restored colonial house.
Obispo #252, esq. a Cuba, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-862-4127

Palacio del Marqués... CA★5
Cuban baroque meets modern minimalist
Oficios #152 esq. a Amargura, Habana Vieja

Hostal Valencia CA★5+
Immensely charming, great value.
Oficios #53 esq. a Obrapia, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-867-1037

Conde de Villanueva CA★5
Delightfully small and intimate. For cigar lovers.
Mercaderes #202, esq. a Lamparilla
☎(+53) 7-862-9293

Business Hotels

Meliá Cohíba CA★5
Oasis of polished marble and professional calm.
Ave Paseo e/ 1ra y 3ra, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-833-3636

Meliá Habana CA★5
Attractive design & extensive facilities.
Ave. 3ra y 70, Miramar
☎(+53) 5-204-8500

Occidental Miramar CA★4+
Good value, large spacious modern rooms.
Ave. 5ta. e/ 70 y 72, Miramar
☎(+53) 7-204-3583

H10 Habana Panorama CA★4+
Cascades of glass. Good wi-fi. Modern.
Ave. 3ra. y 70, Miramar
☎(+53) 7 204-0100

For a sense of history

Ambos Mundos CA★4
A must for Hemingway aficionados
Calle Obispo #153 esq. a Mercaderes, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-860-9529

Mercure Sevilla CA★4
Stunning views from the roof garden restaurant.
Trocajero #55 entre Prado y Zulueta, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-860-8560

Hotel Nacional CA★5
Eclectic art-deco architecture. Gorgeous gardens.
Calle O esq. a 21, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-835 3896

Riviera CA★3
Spectacular views over wave-lashed Malecón
Paseo y Malecón, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-836-4051

Economical/Budget Hotels

Bosque CA★3
On the banks of the Río Almendares.
Calle 28-A e/ 49-A y 49-B, Reparto Kohly, Playa
☎(+53) 7-204-9232

Deauville CA★3
Lack of pretension, great location.
Galiano e/ San Lázaro y Malecón, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-866-8812

Saint John's CA★3
Lively disco, tiny quirky pool. Popular.
Calle O e/ 23 y 25, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-833-3740

Vedado CA★3
Good budget option with a bit of a buzz
Calle O e/ 23 y 25, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-836-4072

Havana's best private places to stay



For Help reserving any Private Accommodation (Casas Particulares) in Cuba please contact **CubanCasas@gmail.com**

Mid range - Casa Particular (B&B)

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>1932 CA★4
Visually stunning, historically fascinating. Welcoming.
Campanario #63 e/ San Lázaro y Laguna, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-863-6203</p> | <p>Carlos in cuba CA★5
Gay Friendly BED and BREAKFAST in Havana
Calle 2 #505 e/ 23 y 21, Vedado
☎(+53) 7-833-1329
☎(+53) 5-295-4893
carlosincuba@yahoo.com
www.carlosincuba.com</p> | <p>Habana CA★5
Beautiful colonial townhouse with great location.
Calle Habana #209, e/ Empedrado, y Tejadillo, Habana Vieja.
☎(+53) 7-861-0253</p> | <p>Julio y Elsa CA★5
Cluttered bohemian feel. Hospitable.
Consulado #162 e/ Colón y Trocadero, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 7-861-8027</p> |
|--|--|---|---|

Up-scale B&Bs (Boutique hostals)

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>Cañaverall House CA★5
But undoubtedly the most beautiful about private homes in Cuba
39A street, #4402, between 44 y 46, Playa, La Habana Cuba
☎(+53) 295-5700
http://www.cubaguesthouse.com/canaverall.home.html?lang=en</p> | <p>Vitrales CA★5
Hospitable, attractive and reliable boutique B&B with 9 bedrooms.
Habana #106 e/ Cuarteles y Chacón, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 7-866-2607</p> | <p>Artedel CA★5+
Ydalgo Martínez Matos's spacious and contemporary 3-bedroom penthouse is magnificent.
Calle I #260 e/ 15 y 17, Vedado
☎(+53) 5-830-8727</p> | <p>Hostal Guanabo CA★5
Beautiful 4 bedroom sea-front villa in sleepy Guanabo. Excellent food.
Calle 480 #1A04 e/ 1ra y 3ra, Guanabo
☎(+53) 7-799-0004</p> |
|---|---|---|--|

Apartment rentals

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p>Bohemia Hostel CA★5+
Gorgeous 1-bedroom apartment beautifully decorated overlooking Plaza Vieja.
San Ignacio #364 e/ Muralla y Teniente Rey, Plaza Vieja Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 5- 403-1568
(+53) 7-836-6567
www.havanabohemia.com</p> | <p>Casa Concordia CA★5+
Beautifully designed and spacious 3 bedroom apartment. Spanish colonial interiors with cheerful, arty accents.
Concordia #151 apto. 8 esq. a San Nicolás, Centro Habana
☎(+53) 5-254-5240
www.casaconcordia.net</p> | <p>Tropicana penhaouse CA★5
A luxurious penthouse with huge roof terrace and breathtaking 360 degree views of Havana and the ocean.
Galiano #60 Penthouse Apt.10 e/ San Lázaro y Trocadero
☎(+53) 5-254-5240</p> | <p>Suite Havana CA★5
Elegant 2-bedroom apartment in restored colonial building. Quality loft style décor.
Lamparilla #62 altos e/ Mercaderes y San Ignacio, Habana Vieja
☎(+53) 5-829-6524</p> |
|---|--|---|---|

Luxury Houses

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Villasol CA★5
Rent Room elegant and well-equipped. Beautiful wild garden and great pool.
Calle 17 #1101 e/ 14 y 16, Vedado
☎(+34) 677525361
☎(+53) 7-832-1927
☎(+53) 5-360-0456</p> | <p>Casablanca CA★5
Elegant well-equipped villa formerly owned by Fulgencio Batista. Beautiful wild garden.
Morro-Cabaña Park. House #29
☎(+53) 5-294-5397
www.havanacasablanca.com</p> | <p>Michael and María Elena CA★5
This leafy oasis in western Havana has an attractive mosaic tiled pool and three modern bedrooms.
Calle 66 #4507 e/ 45 y Final, Playa
☎(+53) 7-209-0084</p> | <p>Residencia Mariby CA★5
A sprawling vanilla-hued mansion with 6 rooms decorated with colonial-era lamps, tiles and Louis XV furniture
Vedado.
☎(+53) 5-370-5559</p> |
|---|---|--|--|

Artedel Luxury

CA ★5+ CA TOP PICK ★



3 BEDROOM PENTHOUSE

Facilities	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Rooms	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Ambience	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Stylish and contemporary furniture along with a beautiful 360-degree view over Havana

Don't Miss Ydalgo – an impeccable host, discreet or gregarious, as you prefer

Calle I #260, e/ 15 and 17, Vedado

☎ (+53) 7-830-8727

Bohemia Hostal

CA ★5+ CA TOP PICK ★



GORGEOUS 1 BEDROOM APARTMENT

Facilities	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Rooms	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Ambience	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Independent beautifully decorated apartment overlooking Plaza Vieja.

Don't Miss Spending time in Havana's most atmospheric Plaza.

San Ignacio #364 e/ Muralla y Teniente Rey, Plaza Vieja, Habana Vieja

bohemia.plazavieja@gmail.com

☎ (+53) 5 4031 568: (53) 7 8366 567

www.havanabohemia.com

Cañaveral House

CA ★5+ CA TOP PICK ★



Facilities	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Rooms	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Ambience	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Large elegant villa away from downtown Havana. Great for families or groups of friends.

Don't Miss Basking in the sun as you stretch out on the lawn of the beautifully kept garden.

39A street, #4402, between 44 y 46, Playa, La Habana Cuba

☎ (+53) 295-5700

<http://www.cubaguesthouse.com/canaveral.home.html?lang=en>

Rosa D'Ortega

CA ★5+ CA TOP PICK ★



BOUTIQUE VILLA

Facilities	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Rooms	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Ambience	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Best for Large elegant villa away from the bustle of downtown Havana. Gracious hosts, beautiful rooms.

Don't Miss Exploring the off-the-beaten track neighbourhood.

Patrocinio #252 esq. a Juan Bruno Zayas, 10 de Octubre

☎ (+53) 7-641-43-29 / (+53) 5-263-3302

<http://www.larosadeortega.com>

THANK YOU

cuba ABSOLUTELY

Wishes to thank all of the following entities for their support and involvement with What's On Havana.



Center for Cuban Studies / Cuban Art Space



Academic Arrangements Abroad