2004

Direction of the Play: Maricela De La Luz Lights The World

Susan Bethany Stratton
Central Washington University

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Direction of the Play: *Maricela de la Luz Lights the World*

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A Project Report

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Theatre Production

---

by

Susan Bethany Stratton

July 2004
ABSTRACT

PROJECT REPORT

Maricela de la Luz Light the World

BOB EUBANKS THEATER CASTLE PARK HIGH SCHOOL

Directed by

Susan Bethany Stratton

March 2004

This project entailed the selection, background research and documentation, casting, direction, and post-production analysis of Castle Park High School’s production of Jose Rivera’s Maricela de la Luz Lights the World. Documentation includes research and analysis of the play, and an evaluation of the play as a production vehicle for the drama department of Castle Park High School. The analysis also includes a discussion as to the non-traditional directorial vision of this production.
CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

Final Examination of

Susan Bethany Stratton

A.B. San Diego State University, 1985

For the Degree of

Master of Arts

Theatre Production

Committee in Charge

Professor Wesley Van Tassel

Professor Christina Barriagan

Professor Michael Smith

McConnell Hall

Wednesday, July 7, 2204

7:00 PM
Susan Bethany Stratton

Courses presented for the Master’s degree

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Total Credit Requirements – 53
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Susan Bethany Stratton

Undergraduate Study:

San Diego State University, 1980 -1985

California State Teaching Credential awarded 1990

Graduate Study:

Central Washington University, 2001-2004

Professional Experience:

Professional Actor: 1985 - 1992

High School Teacher: 1990 -present
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Submit in Quadruplicate

GRADUATE COMMITTEE AND OPTION APPROVAL FORM
CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Note: This form is to be completed as soon as the student has formed a committee and selected an option from the list below. The form should be submitted in quadruplicate to the Office of Graduate Studies in Barge 305.

Name: Susan Stratton
Student ID #: ____________ Date: 9-16-03

Address: ________________________________

Check option: Indicate credits to be received for the thesis or option:

Written Exam*  TH 700  Thesis Project  3
NonThesis Project  TH 700  Thesis Project  3
Creative Project  Course No.  Title  Credits
Studio Project  Course No.  Title  Credits
Portfolio Review
Thesis

*Students taking written exam option may omit items 1-5 below.

1. Proposed Title: Maricela de la Luz Lights the World
2. Purpose of Study: scholarly analysis of dramatic text leading to valid artistic choice
3. Scope of Study: the culmination of coursework in Theatre Arts Masters Program
4. Procedure to be used: Direction of a full length play in home school
5. Does the procedure involve collection of data obtained from:
   Human Subjects (including use of surveys)? Yes** No
   Use of Animals? Yes** No

** If yes, your procedures must be approved in writing by the Human Subjects Committee or the Animal Care and Use Committee before you initiate your research.

Wes VanTassel
Committee Chair (typed or printed)

Michael Smith
Committee Member (typed or printed)

George Bellah
Committee Member (typed or printed)

Approved by:
George Bellah
Dept Chair/Designee (signature)  9/16/03

9/23/03
Date

W. S. Quirk
Approved by:
Associate VP of Graduate Studies

Students will be required to submit two copies of all motion picture film, film strips, sound film strips, slides, tapes, cassettes, pictures, etc. produced as part of the thesis. These are to be submitted at the time the thesis (three copies) is submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research.

Please note:
The signatures have been redacted due to security reasons.
MASTER'S THESIS PROJECT
PLAYSCRIPT APPROVAL FORM

(PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE READ THE PLAY SELECTION CRITERIA SECTION IN YOUR GRADUATE HANDBOOK)

SCRIPT TITLE: Maricela de la Luz Lights the World

PLAYWRIGHT(S) [If musical, list lyricist/composer]: Jose Rivera

NUMBER OF ACTS: 2
APPROXIMATE TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 HOURS 0 MIN.

CAST (fill in with the appropriate numbers)

MEN: 13
WOMEN: 13
CHILDREN: 0
OVER 40: 0

ROLES REQUIRING PEOPLE OF COLOR: 7
ROLES COULD DOUBLE: 3 women/3 men

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAST: 26 maximum

OTHER CASTING CONCERNS:

ARTISTIC STAFF (check those needed for this play or production idea)

MUSICAL DIRECTOR
DANCE CHOREOGRAPHER
FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER
DIALECT COACH
SPECIALTY HIRE (specify what kind)

ORCHESTRA/BAND (specify what size)

Will you be fulfilling any of the above? If so, which?

Will a guest artist be fulfilling any of the above? If so, which?

SCENERY/PROPS (check those needed for this play or your concept of the play)

UNIT SET? YES NO (CIRCLE ONE)
NUMBER OF SETTINGS: 5
HISTORICAL PERIOD: modern day
GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION: Chula Vista, CA

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SET CONCERNS OR SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF PROPS: 30
PERIOD: modern
DIFFICULT OR UNUSUAL PROPS? YES NO (CIRCLE ONE)
DESCRIBE:

WEAPONS OR FIREARMS? HOW MANY: 1
DESCRIBE: Jason's Sword

COSTUMES (CHECK THOSE NEEDED FOR THIS PLAY OR YOUR CONCEPT OF THE PLAY)

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF COSTUMES PER CHARACTER
HISTORICAL PERIOD: modern day
SEASON: Winter in San Diego

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

Fantasy costumes for mythic characters
Parameters Established by the Producing Organization

Maricela de la Luz Lights the World will be produced at Castle Park High School, 1395 Hilltop Dr., Chula Vista, California. The play will be performed in The Bob Eubanks Theater on March 16, 17, 18, and 19, 2004 at 7:00 pm.

This production will have a budget of $4,000.00, to be overseen by the director, Susan Stratton, and ASB coordinator Miriam Duggan. The design crew is as follows: Set Design, Derek Lane; Lighting Design, Darryl Hovis; Costume Design, Kari Glass. All designers have graciously donated their efforts. Foreseen large expenditures are the geodome ($1,500.00 to $2,000.00), lighting rental for approximately fourteen instruments ($300.00), costume supplies ($800.00). Royalties for four performances will cost $240.00.

The Bob Eubanks Theater is a one hundred eighty four seat proscenium theater with a thirty-foot wide by eighteen-foot deep playing space. The theater has a two-scene preset twenty-four channel lighting board with fourteen working lighting instruments. The Yamaha soundboard has eighteen channels. Castle Park High School students will be responsible for operating all technical elements of the production.

The play requires the leading character to fly, and The Bob Eubanks Theater does not have the rigging required to safely fly an actor. Therefore, other solutions to the flying problem have been researched with Set Designer Derek Lane and participants from the original production, which was produced at The La Jolla Playhouse. After speaking with both parties, I have decided “realistic flight” is not necessary for a successful production, and might even be a detriment to the style of theater I wish to create. At this time I have several solutions that I feel confident will work and will choose the one that best fits into the developing production style.

Casting of the play will be from the pool of students at Castle Park High School.
revisiting their previous comfortable world. While parents are still a presence for CPH students, a lack of English competency and long working hours prevents many of them from being involved in their children’s transition into a new world. I know the drama students will find much to relate to in Maricela de la Luz Lights the World.

Any play that features a character that flies presents a unique production challenge. The Bob Eubanks Theater lacks the necessary space for flight rigging. However, my production concept—that the play is happening in Maricela’s mind—solves the problem of flying by creating a set that allows transformation through imagination. Maricela can “fly” in a non-traditional “magical” manner, on the end of a seesaw attached to the geodome that represents her mind. This approach gives the production a way for her to soar that is more in keeping with magic realism and the rest of the production design.
September 10, 2003

Theatre Arts Thesis Committee
Central Washington University
400 E. 8th Avenue
Ellensburg Washington, 98926-7510

Dear Sirs,

I'm delighted to inform you that Susan Stratton will be undertaking her thesis project here at Castle Park High School on March 16-19, 2004. The project will be a production of *Marcia de la Luz Lights the World*, a "Fanciful Drama" by Jose Rivera that is actually set here in Chula Vista, California. The play will be performed in the Bob Eubanks Theater. The budget for the show will be approximately $4,000.00 to be drawn on ASB funds.

I'm looking forward to seeing the production, as I'm sure you are also.

Sincerely,

Maria Castilleja
Principal
Castle Park High School

Please note:
This signature has been redacted due to security reasons.
Evaluation of *Maricela de la Luz Lights the World* as a Production Vehicle at Castle Park High School

There are many similarities between the leading characters in *Maricela de la Luz Lights the World* and the actors and audience at Castle Park High School Theatre. Maricela and her brother Ricardo are children of our modern age. Uprooted from their previous home in the Bronx and transplanted to the unfamiliar world of San Diego, they must survive in their new environment without parental guidance. Half Hispanic and half Scandinavian, their heritage requires they exist in a dual world. To understand who they truly are they must embrace that duality as well as their mixed ancestry. This is the goal of the journey they go on.

Rivera has created a world without parents. Mom has run off to Las Vegas with her new boyfriend and Dad is stationed in Korea. The lack of either a mother or father requires the children to rely on themselves. After all, a hero’s journey, which is what Maricela is on, just wouldn’t be the same with Mom and Dad in tow. *Maricela de la Luz Lights the World* shows how one little girl makes her way through the challenges of our modern-day society and offers hope to children in a similar situation.

While Rivera’s play has a universal quality, Maricela’s journey has particularly strong echoes for the students at Castle Park High school, many of whom are of dual heritage and/or have recently moved to the United States. CPH students are well aware of the need to integrate all cultures represented in their genetic heritage. They are involved in that very process on a daily basis, not wanting to leave the familiar behind in Mexico, yet needing to fit into their new culture in San Diego. The mall Maricela and her brother visit is a familiar hang-out spot for CPH students (it’s less than three miles from campus). Students learn about American consumerism there on Saturdays. On Sundays, they picnic with their families in Balboa Park,
revisiting their previous comfortable world. While parents are still a presence for CPH students, a lack of English competency and working long hours prevents many of them from being involved in their children's transition into a new world. I know the drama students will find much to relate to in Maricela de la Luz Lights the World.

Any play that features a character that flies presents a unique production challenge. The Bob Eubanks Theater lacks the necessary space for flight rigging. However, my production concept—that the play is happening in Maricela's mind—solves the problem of flying by creating a set that allows transformation through imagination. Maricela can "fly" in a non-traditional "magical" manner, on the end of a seesaw attached to the geodome that represents her mind. This approach gives the production a way for her to soar that is more in keeping with magic realism and the rest of the production design.
Director’s Concept for Maricela de la Luz Lights the World

While reading the play Maricela de la Luz Lights the World, I was struck by an image of Maricela’s head, oversized, surrounded by dark space as the constellations and planets twinkled around her. In contrast to Maricela’s large head, the other characters in the play were miniature, colorful versions of themselves, confronting her with their viewpoints and conflicts. This image stayed with me through several readings, and after much thought it became clear to me that Maricela was on a classic psychological journey, in which she encounters ancient archetypical characters created by her mind to help her make the leap from childhood to adulthood. By embracing the ancient gods and goddesses from both sides of her Swedish/Mestizo ancestry, Maricela finds her unique identity and learns the true meaning of heroism and commitment. The image of Maricela’s oversized head (mind) and swirling miniature gods and goddesses has become my production’s concept image.

This surreal image of a girl with an oversized head led me to select magic realism as a visual and interpretive style for my production. Magic Realism requires the viewer to accept the unacceptable in our realistic world. A snowstorm in the middle of a heat wave in San Diego sets Maricela’s world askew and opens the door to further unexplainable events. Moon Gods and Border Goddesses claim to be both real AND out of work actors from nearby Hollywood. The ancient hero Jason and his ship the Argo arrive for a San Diego vacation just like hundreds of other ordinary tourists. And in the heat of the moment, a little girl discovers she can fly. Jose Rivera’s fantastical story requires exciting transformations and places great demands on the audience and production elements of the play—demands that Magic Realism can fill. Finally, Maricela de la Luz Lights the World is a children’s play, and the transformations of magic realism are consistent with a child’s worldview and the traditions of children’s literature. For
these reasons I feel magic realism is a strong and supported choice.

The central concept symbol—Marcela’s mind—offers a solution to the problem of setting. A brain-shaped geodome—a piece of children’s playground equipment—will be set in the center of the stage and will be transformed via Christmas lights into the different locales needed in the play. With the use of a few set pieces and the audience’s imagination it can become the entrance to the shopping mall, Jason’s ship, and the dark cave Maricela must enter at the climax of her journey. The transformation of the geodome further supports the ideas of magic realism and the efforts a little girl’s mind must take to transform herself from the child to adult.

The second set element will be clear plastic tunnels, which will be hung from ceiling to floor to represent Maricela’s brain synapses. Characters may enter and exit through these synapses under the cover of darkness and slits in the plastic. These synapses provide more opportunity for separate locales. Set elements will be steel and plastic, colors will be icy, cool blues and grays, all supporting the frozen world San Diego has become and the gray matter of Maricela’s brain.

In contrast to the set, I want the costuming to be vivid and colorful, in essence “popping” the characters out from the set and dark reaches of Maricela’s mind to give them a dreamlike quality. Maricela is encountering these people in her head and they should have an unreal magical quality. Native American and Norse ceremonial dress will influence the design, pulling in the historical context of myth and it’s importance to people of all times and ages. Maricela is on her own personal hero’s journey or spirit quest, where one encounters and learns from ancient myth and archetypes. These characters need to clearly say they are from the ancient, timeless world of Jungian archetype.

Maricela’s last name, de la Luz, is a significant clue in finding the spine of this play. She is “of the light”. By confronting her journey’s perils she brings enlightenment. She lights her own world and joins the group of past heroes to light the way for future generations. The
lighting design needs to convey both the dark times of doubt one finds on such a trip and the beacons of light, which give us hope, pulling us onward. Frosty lighting will illuminate specific playing areas and color used to highlight the internal thought process Maricela is going through. Beacons of brilliant red, green and blue will spotlight and shine through the plastic of the set materials, bringing to mind the children’s game of “Operation,” where one wrong move of the tweezers start lights flashing and buzzers buzzing. In the final cave scene, Maricela is traveling to the deepest parts of her subconscious mind and must overcome the most difficult part of her journey. Fluorescent paints and black light will help convey this deep internalization.

Choosing Maricela’s brain as the production’s master symbol places the design elements strongly in Expressionism. The play, as I see it, is set inside her mind—the true location of personal transformation. Maricela’s unlimited imagination gives both director and design team an opportunity to explore the theatre’s boundless creativity while addressing the limits staging and production may present. Also, in my experience, audiences love seeing the artifice of theater. The spectacle of the stage transforming before them requires a redefinition of a previously identified object. While the set is changing, the audience’s mind is bending as well. Being led into new territory is exciting; it’s what an audience desires when it sits in a theater seat. This philosophy requires a director to choreograph the transitions of space and time quickly and smoothly. The staging and design of this production must embrace this concept of transformation in order to successfully reflect Rivera’s story of personal transformation.
REHEARSAL SCHEDULE FOR
MARICELA DE LA LUZ LIGHTS THE WORLD

To be performed at the Bob Eubanks Theater, Castle Park High School
On the following dates:

Friday, March 12, 2004
1:00 PM
Chula Vista Senior Citizens

Monday, March 15, 2004
9:00 AM, 10:00 AM, 11:00 AM and 1:00 PM
Castle Park High School Student Body

Tuesday, March 16, 2004
7:00 PM
Public Performance

Wednesday, March 17, 2004
7:00 PM
Public Performance
(Understudies)

Thursday, March 18, 2004
7:00 PM
Public Performance

Friday, March 19, 2004
7:00 PM
Public Performance
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Given Circumstances

*Maricela de la Luz Lights the World* is set in San Diego, California, one week before Christmas. Rivera does not give an exact year, but the use of modern vernacular—"phat"(36), "yo, that’s gotta be computer graphics, bro!”(10) and “messed up”(14)—points to present day. To give the production immediacy, I have decided on the year 2003. Rivera’s stage directions call for "a hot, sunny, too-bright day”(9) at rise. On the first page of the play Maricela refers to a current heat wave: “who can believe it’s Christmas next week in this heat? Stupid San Diego!”(9) Her brother, Riccardo, replies, “I love the hot”(10). Santa Anas—the dry desert wind peculiar to Southern California in the fall and winter—are not uncommon in San Diego during December. Normal temperatures range from 48 to 68, and 72 to 88 during a Santa Ana condition (sdplweb).

The sudden and highly improbable appearance of a snowstorm heralds the beginning of the play’s conflict and Maricela’s journey. Rivera often uses environmental upheaval as a device to symbolize the tumult inside his protagonist’s psyche. In *Maricela de la Luz Lights the World*, the snow has character, dimension and force: “Ow! It bit me! The snow bit me! This snow’s got teeth, Riccardo! Snow’s not supposed to chew people!”(21). Cloud Tectonic’s Los Angeles monsoon is another example of Rivera’s use of climate instability to provoke change in a protagonist’s current worldview.

Rivera gives no time of day, but Maricela says that Ofelia, the children’s babysitter, has "... dropped us off at the mall for a couple of hours...”(15). San Diego malls open at the usual time of 10:00 am. Allowing for a couple hours of window-shopping, I’ve decided to set the play at noon. This makes thematic sense, since noontime marks the beginning of the journey to night. Night’s darkness has traditionally symbolized the unconscious mind, yin and rebirth. The Christ
child was born on a cold night in a lonely manger. Winter is a season of hibernation and incubation; beneath the ice and snow nature turns inward, gathering strength for the rejuvenation of spring. In a play filled with archetypical characters that help a little girl discover a new identity inside her, it is significant that Rivera has placed the play during the Christmas season, in the afternoon, and with harsh and unusual weather. These elements contribute strongly to the play’s theme of rebirth.

Economically, Maricela and Riccardo appear to be lower middle class. They have recently relocated from the Bronx, and their parents are divorced. Papi is stationed in Korea and Mami is “blowing all her money gambling”(15). Divorce and the recent move across country would be a financial burden for a family surviving on military pay.

The political environment Maricela and Riccardo live in is best illustrated in the Border Goddess Ofelia’s monologue:

Once upon a time I dreamed of being a free passageway-like a door between two rooms of the same house. I dreamed of access and peace! Ranchera and rock ‘n’ roll! But forces beyond my control have turned me into a wall, armed and dangerous, where people risk their lives and sometimes die. (18)

This torn political climate is reflected in Maricela’s own description of herself:

Mira, I’m half Puerto Rican, half Swedish. Facing a world where people wanna know what side of the race line you’re on. Half Latina, half Anglo, half East Coast, half West Coast, half girl, half teen, divorced parents and grownups never listen to me! (19)

Maricela’s personal task of internal integration is a microcosm of the political challenge California faces; as the state’s Hispanic population continues to grow. How well Maricela deals with “forces beyond her control”(18) will determine if she grows into “access and peace”(18) or
“a wall, armed and dangerous”(18).

The given circumstances for the social environment also represent a dichotomy. Maricela and her brother Riccardo are of the modern world: bi-racial children of divorce, their world is split in two, inside and out. Their mother is in Las Vegas with her new lover. Their father is stationed in Korea. Dropped off at the local mall by their babysitter, Maricela and Riccardo have been abandoned and lack “adult supervision” (11). Like a modern day Hansel and Gretel, the two are called upon to find their own way through the twenty-first century’s forest—the mall and its seductive Christmas consumerism. The other side of the play’s dichotomy is found in the world of the gods, goddesses, heroes and mythical creatures the kids meet on their journey. These beings represent man at his ideal—archetypical guides who dwell in the spiritual realm, quite the opposite of the materialistic consumerist society the kids live in. Larger than life, and yet not fully recognized by the two children, the gods and goddesses despair, “Oh-quite, quite forgotten!”(16). The heart of the play’s conflict is the children’s struggle to understand and survive in the new world they have been thrust into. Maricela gradually incorporates the strengths of the archetypical characters that she meets and successfully integrates the spirituality of the archetypical world into her modern materialistic world. She finds new, deeper meaning in her modern world and a way to successfully navigate its challenges.

No specific religion is cited in the play, but most likely Maricela and Riccardo are Catholic, as are the majority of Hispanics in the United States. The main religious tenet in the play is expressed in the line, “Evil flourishes when good people do nothing” (20). It is first introduced by Ofelia, as she encourages the kids to take up this philosophy and become heroes, “De la Luz! Que nombre! A name full of power-voltage-electrons! Don’t be afraid. Search your imaginations ... somewhere in the dark hemispheres where dreams are formed, a hero will
Dialogue Analysis

Rivera’s use of modern slang, both English and Spanish, sets the play in current time and illustrates Maricela’s dual cultural existence. Words like “gross,” “ick,” “yo,” “bomb,” “muttface,” “like,” “mira,” “este,” “freak” and “que rico” are a part of the language spoken by San Diego’s Hispanic youth. The children use English and Spanish words interchangeably in a vernacular called “Spanglish.” The gods and goddesses’ word choice is slightly elevated, but not out of reach of the play’s intended audience of children.

Phrases and sentence structure are simple and indicative of modern speech. Line structure is short and filled with brief, snappy, sarcastic barbs, making the dialogue sound similar to TV sit-coms: “You really messed up, Maril!” “Shut up or I maim your face!” (14). These authorial choices make Maricela de la Luz true to its time and place. While the children’s speech is brief, the gods and goddesses give long expository speeches that describe their plight in our modern environment. The length and drama of their speeches suggest a Greek Theatre delivery style, which is appropriate to character and further draws the line between Maricela’s modern material world and their spiritual, archetypical one.

Two phrases are used repeatedly in the play. One is used by every god and goddess when they first meet Maricela and Riccardo, “Oh—quite, quite forgotten”(16). This is in response to the children’s not being aware of the deities’ existence. Rivera is pressing the point that modern man does not look to his past archetypes to learn about himself:

Loki says at the end, a fine hero you are, you battle the Hydra but the Hydra doesn’t exist in the modern world – but there are the internal monsters of apathy and racism and homophobia. Those are the monsters that have to be slain. That’s an argument put forth in Marisol – it’s the demon God within you that has to be conquered in order for consciousness to be raised (Coen 26).
The religion in *Maricela de la Luz Lights the World* is one of myth and personal growth. It is Joseph Campbell’s “hero’s journey,” offering personal salvation for those who strive to overcome the obstacles placed in their path by the mythical world.

**Previous Action**

The previous action in *Maricela de la Luz Lights the World* is not extensive, but it is vital to understand, as the immediate past motivates much of Maricela’s present action and attitudes. Maricela’s family has relocated from the Bronx to San Diego, California. She is not happy about it. Maricela refers to San Diego as “stupid”(9) and Christmas in the Bronx as “the bomb”(10). Maricela’s parents have recently divorced. Maricela describes the current family situation:

> ... our Mami went to Las Vegas with her new boyfriend this weekend and Papi’s stationed in Korea, they’re divorced and he don’t know she’s blowing all her money gambling with this total loser and leaving us with this brain-challenged baby-sitter, Ofelia, who dropped us off at the mall for a couple of hours ... (15)

Maricela also mentions that her parents used to help her get through nightmares when she was little, and how she never realized she needed them “for that”(26).

Perhaps the lack of previous action supplied by Rivera is intentional. Maricela is beginning her growth towards adulthood and the play must begin at her embryonic stage of maturity. Also, by not defining details of Maricela’s life, the character can be identified with by a wide range of audience.
The second oft-repeated phrase is “...evil flourishes when good people do nothing”(20).

At first hearing, Maricela rejects this call to arms, but as the play progresses she willingly takes it on as her personal battle cry, and, in doing so, transforms herself. When Maricela takes the first steps toward action and the transformation that follows, she unknowingly begins to embrace her Chicano/Mestizo heritage and its cultural view of growth and life success.

In the Mestizo view, personality is the sum total of the experiences of coping with life’s challenges and problems...The life history of every person is a series of lessons resulting from successes and failures in meeting life’s diverse challenges. The nature and quality of experiences with life challenges and change determine the degree to which the person is open to and accepting of pluralism and diversity in his/her environment. The person is either open to, and accepting of, diversity, viewing it as the key to surviving rapid and radical change, or he/she is protective, self-centered, and easily threatened by diversity and change (Ramirez III 2).

The images embedded in the dialogue of Maricela de La Luz Lights the World center around personal growth and transformation in the face of “life’s challenges and problems”. The first step of this transformation is a process of illumination. Maricela’s own surname means ‘of the light’, “De la Luz! Que nombre! A name full of power-voltage-electrons!” (20). Illumination is quickly followed by understanding—by intense thought and self examination.

In her speech to Maricela, Ofelia, the Border Goddess, brings forth brain imagery, which suggests Maricela’s salvation can be found in her own mind: “Don’t be afraid. Search your imaginations... somewhere in the dark hemispheres where dreams are formed, a hero will appear”(20).
In the Cyclops’s speech we sense the underground bubbling psychological volcano that will propel Maricela towards her destiny, “. . . surrounded by unfriendly lava—discarded, demeaned, . . . I CAN’T SEE NOTHIN’! My one eye was made for darkness: for the deep caverns and rococo labyrinths of the volcano, . . . I am blinded.”

Most provoking are the images put forth in Maricela’s opening dialogue, “Aaaaah! My eyes are melting in my face! Oozing outta my crusted eyeball sockets, . . . ’til they fall to the ground—I step on ‘em!—splatter!—eyeball juice all over my new sneakers!”(9).

For the scholar, a comparison to Oedipus, Sophocles’s famous tragic hero who fails to see himself truthfully, is unavoidable. The correlation Rivera draws between Maricela and Oedipus is hard to ignore, and is later underlined in the character of the Cyclops. When Maricela provides the Cyclops with modified sunglasses in exchange for his help, she symbolically begins her journey blind. Following the archetypical footsteps of the classic “hero,” Maricela’s actions propel her forward in her journey, where she acquires a new view of herself and personal enlightenment.
Character Analysis for Maricela

What others say about Maricela:

“You don’t even know when you’re in paradise”, “You’re an optometrist”, “You really messed up Mari!” “impure hands”, “I don’t have time to talk to crazy people”, “Mari, don’t be rude”, “That chicken is Maricela”, “De la Luz! Que nombre! A name full of power-voltage-electrons!” “Your mind works in mysterious ways.” “You’re doing a, tu sabes, adequate job.”, “You, Maricela, you, could win the Trojan War single-handedly!”, “THAT THING’S UGLIER THAN YOU!!!”, “You’re so parochial”, “You’re just scared...you’re a selfish, scared little girl!”, “You do have a heart”, “intergalactic visitor”, “spunky”, “rude”, “uninvited interloper”, “You’re totally outta control, girl”, “a bratty little girl”.

What Maricela says about herself:

“My eyes are melting in my face!”, “WE’RE ALONE OVER HERE! WE MIGHT NEED SOME ADULT SUPERVISION!?”, “Optimist. Hardly.”, “I had bad dreams that looked like this dump.”, “I don’t know the way”, “I believe in food, words, arithmetic, physics—answers. I think you only live once and your job in life is to know as much REALITY as possible, meaning the things you touch with your hands...I’m half Puerto Rican, half Swedish. Facing a world where people wanna know what side of the race line you’re on. Half Latina, half Anglo, half East Coast, half West Coast, half girl, half teen, divorced parents-and grownups never listen to me!”, “Travelers. Simple, unarmed, not-very-digestible.”, “I’m totally good in a crisis”, “I like to wake up from my bad dreams”, “I thought I didn’t need them”, “I like people”, “I’m lunch”, “paranoid”, “I belong up here, higher than all the lights of the Milky Way! Bigger and brighter and better than anything!”, “I’m one of them now! I’m a diamond! I’m an explosion!”, “everything I did, I did for nothing!”, “I was a hero...”, “Now, I’m a part of this city”. 
During the course of the play, Maricela experiences a major shift in attitude about herself and what she is truly capable of. In the beginning of the play, she does not like her environment: “Oye, don’t even start with me: who can believe it’s Christmas next week in this heat? Stupid San Diego!” (9). She is reluctant to get involved in the cosmic battle between Loki and the other gods and doesn’t believe that Xbalanque is who he says he is, saying, “He’s a con artist” (16). She tells Ofelia, the Goddess of the United States/Mexico Border, to get a grip on her life and talk about reality. “I believe in food, words, arithmetic, physics—answers. I think you only live once and your job in life is to know as much REALITY as possible, meaning the things you touch with your hands . . .” she is frustrated because, “grownups never listen to me!” (19).

At the end of the play, after Maricela succeeds in shattering Loki’s crystal, which sets free the kidnapped Sun God, Hunahpu, and thereby ends the cosmic battle between the gods, she undergoes a transformation in her worldview:

Now I’m part of this city. I know it ain’t perfect. There’s demons and monsters here, more than you can imagine. But you know what? It’s different now. It’s got me to deal with now. This place is my place. This time is my time. This place is a part of me and I’m a part of it (51).

She is also ready to talk to her mother truthfully, “I just wanna...sit down with Mami, and tell her I think she’s losing her personality to her android boyfriend, and I’m not gonna let her do it. She can hate me if she wants, but I have to tell her the truth” (52).

Through her interaction with the very things she refuses to believe in, Maricela transforms her attitudes about herself and reality. This is in keeping with the viewpoint of Chicano/Mestizo psychology that asserts that the individual is socialized to develop a strong sense of responsibility to the group and is representative of the group. An, “I am the people,” mindset is seen as maturity and a positive trait for an individual to achieve. (Ramirez III 1)
Character Analysis for Riccardo

What others say about Riccardo:


What Riccardo says about himself:

“I love the hot”, “I would really like to freak”, “a couple o’nice charming, good-looking children”, “I just wanna go back to where I know what everything means.”, “I think we gotta listen to her”, “Harmless. Bien tiny”, “I’m not technically starving to death”, “I’m starting to forget stuff…dang, I can’t remember what Papi looked like”, “All I want to do is forget”, “forget and sleep”, “I was only kidding!”, “I’m not kidding—I saw something really weird just now.”, “We’re not from another planet. We’re from San Diego”, “I can’t sing. I couldn’t even make chorus”, “I just got this really weird feeling, …like invisible people are watching us. Lots and lots of them.”

Riccardo’s character arc does not travel the extremes that Maricela’s does. He begins the play more relaxed and open to the world than Maricela. Perhaps this is because he is second born and does not have the responsibility that a firstborn is traditionally saddled with. His role as brotherly sidekick is to keep Maricela on track in their adventure. In the beginning, while he is frightened, he is excited when Xbalanque explains to the children that a cosmic god battle is about to begin: “A god battle? Que rico!”(16). He encourages Maricela to receive Ofelia’s challenge to save the world—“I think we gotta listen to her—they!”(20). He reminds Maricela that she is doing a good job being an older sister when she doubts her ability. “You’re doing a, tu sabes, adequate job”(26). Riccardo readily joins Maricela in her plan to split the seven-headed
Hydra in two without preconsulting. He simply follows her orders despite not understanding them. The plan works and together they conquer this monster. Riccardo’s trust and faith in his sister builds her confidence. When Maricela flies too high with her newfound wings Riccardo jumps into the ocean, forcing Maricela to abandon her “ego” flight and rescue him. So it is Riccardo who brings her down to earth. At the end of the play, when all has been resolved, Riccardo senses the archetypes around the two children. “Wow? I just got this really weird feeling, Maricela. Like invisible people are watching us” (52). He is the sensor and ready to easily believe. His stance also provides a counterpoint to Maricela’s worldview, “That’s just your imagination, hermano” (52). Together the two of them create a rounded viewpoint of the world. Each is necessary to the other for balance and growth. This duality, expressed by Riccardo and Maricela, is a part of the Mestizo worldview:

Duality of origin and life in the universe and education within the family plays a central role in personality development. The psychological concept of the duality of origin and life emerged from the cultures of Indian nations of Central and South America and the Caribbean. Polar opposites – male and female, religion and war, poetry and math – were often fused in the cultures of the Nahuas and the Mayas. (Ramirez III 2)
Character Analysis for Xbalanque

What others say about Xbalanque:

“What was that?”, “Maybe it’s help.”, “senor”, “bro”, “You must be new to California, stranger”, “cross-dressing, unemployed actor-type”, “certified, stupid NUTCASE!”, “con artist.”

What Xbalanque says about himself:

“I don’t have time to talk to crazy people”, “A terrible thing has happened. And I must take care of it right now!”, “I will avenge him, or my name isn’t Xbalanque!”, “Xbalanque. Means ‘Full Moon’. My twin brother is Hunahpu. Mayan Sun God? I’m the Moon God? We’re a set?”, “quite, quite forgotten!”

Xbalanque is the first god to appear in the play. His entrance is quite stunning. He bounds into the chaotic world of Christmas frenzy screaming for his lost brother. His outrageous costume and god-like manner are out of sync, even in the mall-madness that the freak snowstorm causes. He demands respect of the children: “Do you know who you are touching?...get your impure hands OFF me!”(15). His prayer to Loki and promise to avenge his brother’s kidnapping is a display of Shaumanistic power the children have never experienced, but is very much a part of the Mestizo culture. He is the missing link to the children’s past. A powerful god team in Mayan myth, Xbalanque and his brother Hunapu are twins who symbolize the duality of man. Representing night and day, the stories that were told about this dynamic duo gave Mayan man a way to understand his environment. Xbalanque calls upon Maricela’s help to no avail. If she would only agree to help the Moon God, her journey to true identity would begin, but these modern-day mall-rats are having none of his “con artist” come on. Rejected, he continues the search for his brother unaided. Another messenger must arrive to jumpstart the children’s journey.
Character Analysis for Ofelia

What others say about Ofelia:

"Who are you people, dressed so funny and weird?", "get a grip on your life, you two!", "I think we gotta listen to her-them!"

What Ofelia says about herself:

"You have to help me", "I'm cold", "we have to come forward—materialize—make contact across the space separating the visible world from the invisible one," "I need you", "I'm dying!", "I am Ofelia, Goddess of the U.S-Mexico Border.", "quite, quite forgotten!", "I wasn't always a goddess. I came to the West Coast long ago to be an actress. But I'm half-Latina and there wasn't any work for a Latina actress. So I quit the business and took up meditation and I meditated all day long — until! — I was transformed utterly! I became a goddess and started protecting the U.S.-Mexico border as it cut through the landscape. Half of me looks north, half looks south, and my heart beats for both sides, Once upon a time I dreamed of being a free passageway—like a door between two rooms of the same house. I dreamed of access and peace! Ranchera and rock 'n' roll! But forces beyond my control have turned me into a wall, armed and dangerous, where people risk their lives and sometimes die. It makes me so sad! Look at my hair! Filled with barbed wire and broken hearts! Very upsetting!"(18).

Ofelia arrives, half angel, half political advocate and most definitely a messenger from beyond with an urgent plea. She sacrifices her life to push Maricela into action. It is no mistake that Rivera duplicates the neglectful babysitter's ("brain-challenged") name and uses it for this U.S-Mexico Goddess of the Border. Illegal immigrants struggle daily with their unfamiliar and
dangerous new environment, much in need of their “motherland” Mexico. Babysitter, mother, heavenly angel, life coach—Ofelia is an echo of Maricela’s “real life.” She is a messenger of the mind and a call from Maricela’s own psyche to move forward. “If somebody—say, you two for instance, could bring back the sunlight, you’d be heroes!”(19). It is Ofelia’s “freezing” that spurs the children to action. They promise to find help and return to “team up and find that guy with the helmet and the crystal and kick his butt!” (21).

Character Analysis for Cyclops

What others say about Cyclops:

“Stinky”, “too gross to live”, “amazing”, “Dude needs major therapy.”,
“bendito”, “unique, gentle, handsome, depressing”, “He’s happy”, “you’re scared”, “BIG LOSER!”, “CHICKEN!”

What the Cyclops says about himself:

“Unhappy me!” Unattractive, vulnerable, living in substandard housing, surrounded by unfriendly lava-discarded, demeaned, depressed!” “I CAN’T SEE NOTHING!”, “My one eye was made for darkness”, “I am blinded by the glare!”, “how odious I am!”, “A Cyclops has a great heart”, “My heart is the biggest organ in my body!”, “my existential torment, my gloom”, “my indescribable ugliness and bad breath!”, “Unhappy, trusting, soft-hearted Cyclops!”, “My own father, the Sky God, rejected me!”

Physically resembling a big, strong father/savior figure, Cyclops is the opposite. He is needy, greedy and emotionally volatile. To seek information from him, Maricela convinces him her recent mall sunglasses purchase will cut the glare of the snow and help him see more clearly. With this action we see Maricela’s first attempt to help the “Cyclops child” of her psyche grow. Cyclops happily dons the sunglasses and then abandons the children when Loki threatens thunder. He is unable to face the threat of
danger, but grateful for the ego boost: "You’re my heroes! Thanks for the eyesight!"(25)

Left alone with the responsibility of a little brother, Maricela contemplates her need of parental guidance. "I like to wake up from my bad dreams entiendes? When I didn’t, Mami and Papi always got me through the nightmares. I thought I didn’t need them for that"(26).

Character Analysis for Jason

What others say about Jason:

"Big, bulky, hairy guys from antiquity.", "senor", "Ain’t you un poquito off course?", "card-carrying heroes", "Heroes don’t turn their backs on children!", "you’re not from this day and age!", "You’re from mythology", "You’re the big, bad hero!", "You owe us pal.", "USELESS!"

What Jason says about himself:

"We’re not supposed to be rescuing people today", "we’re on vacation", "Look, girlene, in this day and age definitions are flexible, the lines are blurred, you know? A hero means something else in this day and age.”, "what am I—fiction?", "don’t you think it gets a little boring battling the demons of the collective unconscious year after year?" "We’re old-fashioned heroes.” “You gotta dump us”, “Don’t have a lotta choice, do I?”, “I don’t want to mess with that!”,”I can’t swim.”

Jason and his Argonauts arrive on cue to save the children from the snow wolves that have begun to gather. In traditional hero fashion, he leaps from the bow of the Argo and slashes away at the hungry pack that has surrounded Maricela and Riccardo. Grateful and relieved to find an adult who can take charge, they tell him of the disaster that has struck San Diego. But they are met with reluctance and Jason explains the old gods and heroes are
inadequate to deal with today's problems. They need the help of a modern hero. Through
Jason, Rivera puts forth the main theme of his play:

"Besides, you people from the present, your problems are just too big for us.
We're old-fashioned heroes. We fight with dinky Bronze-Age swords. We wear
sandals into battle! Give the average guy in your world an M-16 and he could
wipe out all of Troy in one afternoon! You, Maricela, you could win the Trojan
War single-handedly!" (29)

When confronted with the seven-headed hydra, which could be seen as a euphemism for
modern-day penchant for multi-tasking, Jason panics. "What're we gonna do? Think of
something, Maricela! Please!" (33) Unequipped and unmotivated, Jason and his famous
Argonauts leave the play with a very un-hero like line, "I can't swim! Neither can I"(39).

Character Analysis for Loki

What others say about Loki:

"Sovereign Plumed Serpent! Heart of Sky! Thunderbolt Hurricane!", "maverick
God", "Forces of Ice and Frostbite!", "someone in the mythic world has stepped
out of line", "cracked the thin shell separating our worlds", "a little creature...he
was wearing a Viking helmet, flying around with a glowing blue crystal in his
hand", "notorious, noxious, horrible and really nasty God of Ice and Snow", "the
reason for all the insanity around here", "Crazy Loki!", "He's a trickster god.
And a first-class sleaze bucket", "you lose, bro", "before I met you, I never did
nothing", "I have you to thank for that."

What Loki says about himself:

AS FOG: "I'm made of air. My body is a mist. I have no will. The currents in the
wind are my muscles. I go where I'm told. When I'm too dense, I rain. Feels good!"
“I could take you to some beautiful places”, “we’ll play”, “I’M NOT THROUGH YET!”, “He needs me!”

AS SNOW WOMAN: “I’m a snow woman.”, “I can talk, I can breathe! My blood is very cold. But it’s my blood. My heart beats softly. But it’s my heart. I’m alive.”, “We like it here.”

AS LOKI: “I can’t believe this.”, “quite, quite forgotten!”, “I wanted to be remembered. To make a comeback. Stage a little demonstration of my power. Conquer some territory. Terrify the other gods! Figured if I could take bright, hot San Diego on the first try, I could take anything!”, “I heard you talking about missing the snow and it made me brave and I did it!”, “I just wanted POWER!”, “I wanted the world worshipping me instead of the Sun: to sing praises to the New Ice Age, Loki’s Ice Age!”, “I’m not through. Fact is, I ain’t even started.”, “I’ll be back and I’ll be bad. I’ll be really bad.”

Loki, the Norse God of Ice and Earthquakes, is a shape shifter who becomes a pack of snow wolves, a seven-headed hydra, the narcotic fog, a possessive snake, the icy snow woman and last of all his truthful childish self. He fills all his villainous roles with great glee and provides the necessary evil in the play. Without Loki, Maricela would have no fight, no struggle, and no journey to growth. Predatory, monstrous, seductive, regal and bratty, Loki takes many different tactics to assert his power and provide Maricela with a worthy adversary. Loki also represents the Swedish part of Maricela, which she must also incorporate and embrace, if she is to know her true self. “Know thy enemy, know thyself.” This is certainly true of Maricela when she realizes how Loki helped her become more comfortable with herself and her place in the world. At the end of the play Maricela has matured enough to understand Loki’s necessity and
the role he plays in her enlightenment. "This place is my place. This time is my time. This place is part of me and I’m part of it. And I have you to thank for that."(51)
Ideas of the Play

*Maricela de la Luz Lights the World* is about personal enlightenment and how it can be achieved by looking within yourself, using the lens of your culture and the archetypes that represent the collective human experience. Maricela belongs to a soup of cultures—North American, Puerto Rican and Swedish. It is only through the integration and acceptance of all three cultures that she can be whole.

Rivera has said the play is about “the individual in relation to our collective myth”. (Coen 26) And while the collective myth draws its strength from ancient times, one of the major ideas in the play is the inadequacy of ancient heroes as archetypes for our modern world. Rivera’s play suggests modern generations must create new heroes for themselves.

Rivera advocates his viewpoint through the ancient Greek hero Jason:

Besides, you people from the present, your problems are just too big for us. We’re old-fashioned heroes. We fight with dinky Bronze-Age swords. We wear sandals into battle! Give the average guy in your world an M-16 and he could wipe out all of Troy in one afternoon! You, Maricela, you could win the Trojan War single-handedly! (29)

Rivera says his use of Greek and Nordic mythologies was

... a happy accident, because I think ultimately they all draw from the same collective dream that we have, just under slightly different names.

I also like the idea that the myths keep themselves separate, and one of the reasons that this whole crisis has come about is that Loki has stepped beyond the bounds of his prescribed role as a Snow God. He has made the mythic world out of balance by transgressing, by crossing borders, and I like that idea, because I think our experience over the last 10 [sic] years has been the obliteration of cultural borders in
every conceivable way. The mythic world is lagging behind, but they’re beginning to come together. (Coen 26)

Set in a mall during the height of Christmas 2003, Maricela’s material reality is obvious. It is a world that, though it makes her unhappy, is familiar and safe. As Maricela encounters the gods and mythical creatures of her spiritual journey, she seems unaware that they represent the cultures she must integrate. Loki is a Norse God. The Border Goddess represents both the split between the North American and Mexican cultures and the internal clash within Maricela of Hispanic and United States citizen. By their very nature, archetypes transcend culture to teach humanity important life lessons. But on the Hero’s journey, you must be willing to take action—not just contemplate—and you cannot achieve enlightenment without a concern for others. Abandoned by her parents and babysitter, Maricela has no adult to show her the way and must find it in herself to lead her brother back to safety. It’s not a solo journey, as shown by her decision to stop soaring and start saving her little brother Riccardo. Enlightenment without responsibility to others is egotism. This self-centered soaring ended badly for Icarus, and would have ended badly for Marciela had she not felt the need to save Riccardo.

Joseph Campbell, well know for his extensive study of myth and its role in our lives, defines a hero by his actions: “There is what I would call the hero journey, the night sea journey, the hero quest, where the individual is going to bring forth in his life something that was never beheld before” (Campbell 76).

At the end of the play, after successfully battling evil, Maricela has embraced the wisdom of the gods and brought peace to San Diego and herself. She feels connected to her past cultures and responsibility towards her present one. She is ready to take ownership of her own existence, because she has become her own hero, conquering her own modern-day demons.
A second major theme in *Maricela de la Luz Lights the World* is duality and its role in personal growth. Polar opposites abound in Rivera’s work. Their coexistence is the very stuff of which the Chicano/Mestizo universe is made. Duality is to be embraced, male/female, religion/war, poetry/math, science/mysticism. Incorporating the duality the universe presents leads to healthy personality development. Rivera provides Maricela the opportunity to embrace this cultural idea through the many characters that represent duality. Xbalanque, the Mayan Moon God, searches desperately for his stolen twin brother, Hunahpu, the Sun God. Ofelia, the Border Goddess, has two heads. One looks south to Mexico and the other, north to the United States. Smiling Adriano has been cursed by a spell, and is forever trapped side by side in a cave wall with the love of his life, frowning Adriana.

Maricela and Riccardo are, themselves, sibling opposites. Maricela is action—oriented and comfortable with “…REALITY…meaning the things you touch with your hands” (19). She is science and empirical answers. Riccardo is more spiritual and in tune with the unseen: “Wow! I just got this really weird feeling, Maricela…Like invisible people are watching us” (52). Her reply demonstrates her world view: “That’s just your imagination, hermano. Just your imagination” (52). These opposing traits—science and mysticism—are classically construed as male/female, yin/yang. But, the children are reversed. Maricela is comfortable with the classic male yang outlook and Riccardo demonstrates the female yin.

Rivera has also created an environment expressing opposites. San Diego is typically sunny and warm, but Loki, the Nordic trickster God, has turned it into a world of ice and freezing temperatures. Director Tina Landau says Rivera’s “environment needs to be treated as a character” (Landau xii). But she also says, “none of Jose’s plays are any one thing” (Landau xi). This is what makes Rivera’s plays great. They encompass many themes and offer the viewing audience the multiplicity found in life.
By Jake Dreiling  
Staff Writer

Remember when you were ten and Christmas came? Remember that intense sense of euphoria that washed over you when you started to hear Christmas songs and the big JC Penny catalog came with fifty pages of toys, toys and more toys? How about the endless hours spent in front of the TV, watching those surrealistic stop-motion Christmas specials with Rudolph, Jack Frost and Baby New Year?

You want those feelings again?

Go see "Maricela de la Luz Lights the World" and recapture those warm, fuzzy Christmas emotions.

The play is set in Los Angeles at a mall at Christmas. The two main characters are Maricela, played by Madelyn Suriel, and Ricardo, her brother, played by Juan Lacayo. The two become stranded at the mall when it starts to snow and all the native L.A. adults flee in fear. The two children soon discover that the barrier between the realistic world and the Greek, Nordic and Mayan mythological fantasy world has blurred, revealing spectral gods and goddesses fighting between good and evil. The children are told they must become heroes and bring light back into the frozen world. Sounds pretty Christmas-specialish, doesn't it?

The actors that play the two de la Luz children are consistently believable throughout the play. Often when adults try to play children, they seem condescending and fake. This was not the case for the sibling heroes Maricela and Ricardo. They do a great job of playing little kids. Both Suriel and Lacayo kept the illusion of prepubescence up while delivering their roles with maturity.

Once the snow falls and the children start to interact with the mythological world, more great characters materialize. Each of the famous mythological characters that are introduced seem to have soaked in some of our "realistic" world. The Moon God, played by Maurice Thomas (who also plays his twin brother, the Sun God) blends effectively the looming greatness of a god with the casualness of a common man. Dakeya "Pele" Woods does a marvelous job of playing Jason of the Argonauts. The transition he made from a mythological hero to a...
Playwright Jose Rivera

Read much about playwright Jose Rivera and you’re bound to encounter the words, “magic realism.” Magic realism is a term originally coined in the nineteen twenties by German art critic Franz Roh, who was describing painters trying to show reality in a new way. In 1949, the term was borrowed by the literary world to describe a style of writing that is characterized by fantastical events woven into “normal” narrative. In Maricela de la Luz Lights the World, Rivera writes of freak snowstorms in Southern California, a two-headed goddess espousing United States/Mexico border policies, and a little girl who learns she can fly. These extraordinary events take place in ordinary life and lead to personal transformation within the play’s leading character, Maricela.

Jose Rivera was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on March 24, 1955, the eldest of six children (Bio.htm). In 1959, his family moved to Long Island, hoping to escape the hardships of their native island. Rivera’s family struggled. Poverty and prejudice were a part of their daily lives. “In my child’s mind, to be Hispanic was to be poor, and to be non-Hispanic was to prosper. It would be a long, long time before I let go of that idea” (Bio/CSUSM).

As a teenager wanting acceptance, Rivera rejected his Puerto Rican identity and the poverty he associated with it. His criticism of his culture can be seen in his first successful play, The House of Ramon Iglesia: “Written in the vein of the angry young man genre, The House of Ramon Iglesia is based on Rivera’s frustration in trying to reconcile the white, upper-class, professional values he received at college with his family’s old-world, Puerto Rican traditions” (Bio/CSUSM).
Rivera’s play borrows heavily from Frederico Garcia Lorca’s *La casa de Bernard Alba*. The play’s plot and title echo the classic, yet add the modern twist of sarcasm. Later works show a playwright who has embraced his culture and matured in his views:

There’s a defiance to standing outside a culture, writing about it, and saying I see you more clearly than you see yourself... I rebelled against my family as a teenager. I wanted to grow my hair long and listen to the Stones and not have any connection to the Island in a deep way. Now, I feel like I live in two worlds. (Morales 79)

Studying under magic-realist novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez at the Sundance Institute, Rivera learned that, “nothing is symbolic; nothing is pure imagination. Everything comes from life itself” (Stage Persona). Or, magic is part of our real world. Theatre director Tina Landau says, “The worlds of Jose’s plays are fantastical because they express the way things *really* are, under the surface” (Landau x). She also observes that, “Jose’s plays are not as much about individuals as they are about individuals in relation to the universe” (Landau x).

In his 1992 apocalyptic vision of New York, *Marisol*, Rivera creates a heroine who is struggling to survive in the face of a city gone haywire. The moon has mysteriously disappeared from the sky. Smoke, from the burning of Ohio, blankets the city. And an angel arrives in the night to tell Marisol that God is senile and all guardian angels are banding together for revolt. Humanity and identity in question, Marisol searches the city streets for answers and in taking action, discovers herself.

With a missing sun, a blanket of snow and a two-headed goddess bearing a message from an unseen world, *Maricela* looks surprisingly similar to *Marisol*. Rivera, himself, draws comparisons:

I’ve joked to some friends that this play is *Marisol’s* little sister, and the name *Maricela* was an intentional choice. In some ways they’re both journey plays, they’re
both encounters with dream-like characters, and they both deal with the individual in
relation to our collective myth. So those are very conscious decisions. (Coen 26)

Originally a series of bedtime stories for his daughter, Adena, in which she got to save Los
Angeles on a nightly basis, Rivera found “the idea of empowering a young girl to find her own
internal hero is [sic] worth writing about”(Coen 26). Viewing modern day heroism “as an
internal struggle” with “monsters of apathy and racism”(Coen 26), perhaps the transformation
that Rivera’s characters go through reflect the playwright’s own personal “hero’s path” to accept
himself and the culture in which he grew up.
Learning Goals For Students

Through the experience of creating *Maricela de la Luz Lights the World*, the students will:

1. Acquire knowledge of those factors that characterize a good theatrical presentation and be able to evaluate its structure and elements through director note sessions and required script breakdown of beats.

2. Use their creative imagination to develop a character through a variety of rehearsal techniques and improvisation. Students will collaborate with the costume designer in the creation of their costume.

3. Learn to actively listen to others onstage through rehearsal techniques and improvisation.

4. Analyze character, motivation, and conflicts using a written character analysis, which will include research into character background and polar attitudes.

5. Become aware of cultural contributions in the play through research and study of the archetypes, symbols, and icons in the script. Students will study playwright Jose Rivera and his unique cultural contribution to modern drama.

6. Practice positive communication skills with all members of the production, increasing their interpersonal social skills.

7. Practice daily self-discipline and goal-setting as they progress through the rehearsal process.
Production Journal

January 1

I have been frozen and not able to move forward with the preblocking of the play. Derek’s design and use of a geodome to represent Mari’s head seemed pure genius this summer, but in practicality, it has presented problems in blocking that I cannot seem to overcome. I am panicked. I want this play to be perfect and that pursuit is preventing me from using my normal creative problem-solving process. If this were “just another production,” Derek’s design would have been tossed out weeks ago. But today I hit such a state of mental constipation; I decided to just play with the idea of using a different approach to the set. I set off to Balboa Park where the children’s playground caught my eye several days ago. Sitting in front of one particular playground jungle gym structure, I reread the play and blocked the actors in my head. Eureka! It works! Without Derek here to advise, I will morph the set to work for my situation. I am reminded that the creative process cannot be forced, one has to “go with the flow,” and not hang on too tightly to preconceived notions. A play has a life of its own and many people contribute to its final form. I think I will put up a sign on my desk that reminds me “it’s not just your Masters, it belongs to everyone who participates.”

January 2

Still no word from Derek. Darryl emailed me to let me know he was still on board to light the show. Yeah! With his and Kari’s talents added to the soup, the show should be a visual success.

January 5

Emailed Wes for an extension on Part II due date. The way my personal life is going I figure I will need at least two weeks to complete the section.

January 7

Second read thru with cast. Kids don’t see the value in this. They are so visual, but they lack the “mind’s eye.” Tomorrow they go up on their feet with scripts. A moving read thru.

January 8

Moving read thru sent cast into spasms. Good. I want them to find their own visions. I don’t want to spoon-feed my vision. I’ve talked long enough about all my research, given them copies and had them bring in their own research on their characters. Putting it together into something appears to mystify them. They still expect me to tell them where to sit and stand. I will schedule in improv sessions.
January 14

Meeting to plan the school-wide Arts Festival at lunch. ‘No, I can’t coordinate the entire festival. Yeah, that’s right, I’m doing a play or something.’ Man, are drama teachers alone on campus or what!

January 15

Improvs seem to loosen kids up. I say yes to everything they pull out. They look at me in disbelief. Ha!

January 20

Faxed floor plan to Derek. He finally responds after numerous calls to his cell. He is very supportive of my changes. “Go for it, Sue.”

January 26

I have taped off the floor plan on the stage. This should help Ron my set-builder visualize the set. The Arts festival has been performing on my stage all week during the regular school day. I have been acting house manager, booking agent, teacher (“go out and chill under the trees”), MC AND I have been completing the final blocking rehearsals for Mari. This is nuts! It is my philosophy in education, that one day a year the custodian should be principal, and the principal should teach, and the teachers should mop floors. Maybe this way we would understand each other’s jobs and appreciate the unique stress we are under. Our Dean of Student Activities thinks I’m great, but has no idea what she has done to the show or my stress level by insisting the Arts Festival take place in the theatre ALL this week. She doesn’t seem aware of the masking tape on the floor of the stage, which really looks tacky, but is my private revenge.

February 3

Met with Ron today regarding set. Think we got things figured out, but I am not thoroughly happy with plan. Maybe I am trying to accomplish too much on high school resources. If this were not my thesis I would just say, “What the hell, it’ll work, we’ll make it work.” Once again, my desire for perfection stymies me. Let it go. This IS HIGHSCHOOL theatre in PROCESS – PROCESS MS. STRATTON.

February 4

Good working rehearsal today. Kids really kicked. Talked to Viri and Marcus (Mari and Riccardo) before rehearsal about loving connection between the two characters. They have the sister/brother irritation factor down pat, but it overrides the love. They worked hard on balancing today and it showed.
February 5

Booked Derek on a flight for the 22nd of this month. Looking forward to his expertise and advice on a set I’ve worried myself to death over. I no longer trust my instincts. This is so unlike me. Terrific rehearsal today! Worked last scene with heroes and ran entire act. It flew! Chemistry between kids created new character stuff all over the stage. Even Reyna, who has missed several rehearsals due to her medical condition kept pace. I forgot to give notes to my A.D., I was so caught up in the energy of the show.

February 9

HORRIBLE rehearsal. Set came in today and instead of incorporating it into their performance the kids IGNORED it. IT’S HUGE. How could they ignore it! AGGGHHH! This is the frustration and difference between high school actors and professionals. Even after I stopped rehearsal and talked about how an actor uses the set to improve their portrayal, they were clueless. Rehearsal was a long tedious process as my AD, Melissa, and I walked the kids through every little blocking movement. Thank God Melissa is a meticulous note taker. NOBODY had fun.

February 10

Another rotten rehearsal. Kids aren’t taking on the responsibility of their characters. They are not using rehearsal to improve and explore. The set seems to have intimidated them. Viri is having trouble supporting her breath due to all the physical action (running up stairs, crossing monkey bars, carrying Marcus). I tell her that her warm up now includes jumping rope for 5 minutes to work up to 15 minutes, every day. She is not happy. She glares at me. I tell her she’ll appreciate the work in the end. Andre volunteers to train her. Now she’s happy. I wonder why.

February 11

Today in warm up I told the kids they were five years old and that mom was going to sit on that bench over there and read while they played on the jungle gym. Silence. Then Erick dubiously said, “OK”. They started out embarrassed high schoolers and quickly got into it. After a few minutes I told them now they were their characters at the age of five playing on the jungle gym. Improvs worked like a dream. They lost much of their fear of interacting with the set, and I want actors all over that set. The set represents Mari’s mind and these characters are “of” her mind, so this is their home, intertwined between synapses, blood vessels and gray matter.

February 13

Holiday today, but not for me. Ron and I finished building the set this morning. I am pleased with the final product. I like it. The kids love it. Paint party on Sunday.
February 20

Kids and I stayed late Friday to finish painting set. I’m pleased with set, but anxious to see what Kari and Derek think of the bold color, “Some Enchanted Evening,” a Disney paint that is lavender. I picked an accent color called “Warp Speed Blue,” sort of a deep blue/purple. Valentina and Bernie are eating up the new Soundtrack editing program I purchased. The results are fabulous. Kids are so comfortable on computers. Show is in a good spot too. Here we go, as tech kicks into hard drive on Monday.

February 22

Sunday, and I’m cleaning house. Kari and her design buddy Tara arrive this evening. Derek comes in at 11:00 pm. Picked Derek up at the airport. Hadn’t heard from him and didn’t quite know if he was going to show, but there he was, his sweet round face smiling at me, happy to be in San Diego. He and Kari got into design-speak the minute I got him home. They stayed up until 3:00 am lost in “design time.” I, intelligently, went to bed.

February 23

Run-thru scheduled for tonight’s rehearsal. I want Derek to watch, but he, Kari and Tara show up in the van around 2:00 and are still in their design mode. Now is not the time. I ignore them, letting them continue in their thoughts while I run a run-thru. Kids are watching the two with caution. After rehearsal we hit Home Depot about 9:00 pm. I push the cart while Kari and Derek run madly up and down the isles in ecstasy. Whoa, their excitement is phenomenal and I will never see Home Depot in the same way again. They did appreciate my signature joke, “You know you are a dedicated drama teacher when you find yourself standing in the middle of a Home Depot aisle at 10:00 at night asking yourself, now what could I use this for?”

February 24

Derek paints stage. Kids are amazed at his spatter technique. I hear Valentina say she wants to do her bedroom walls that way. (Sorry Mrs. Mandarin.) The kids are also amazed at Derek’s focus, so am I. He’s something to watch when he is in the middle of creation. Kari sets up the back vom’ for her sewing area. I hear her bossing Tara around about plastic bag organization. Little did I know Derek and I would be at the theater until 2:30 that night. We created templates for the kids to follow to make icebergs and snow fields. A lot of the time was spent with Derek staring at the stage, hand over mouth, and invariably saying, “or we could...” and showing another option. At 2:00 am I stopped the option process, thus learning or relearning that the only person who truly understands what OPENING NIGHT means is the Director. Great night!
February 25

Exhausted. Had whole design team here yesterday and with the late night and having to teach a dance class at 8:00 am, I feel 41. The rest of the team is still asleep on my couch. Kari drops Derek off at the airport this morning. Oh what a night though!

February 26

Uninspired rehearsal today. Viri was unfocused and dropping character during crucial scene with John, who plays Jason. Marcus cut his hair! He knows better, I’m mad! He looks older. Kari put a backwards ball cap on him, which he hates, but improves the age illusion and will be his punishment for not talking to his director first. Kids have experienced so much in the last few days with Derek and Kari around. Like me, they are out of gas, but we can’t afford any down time.

March 1

Tara has designed an incredible flyer for the show. We blow it up into poster size and start publicity. My principal comments on the “beautiful poster” we put up on the front door of the office. Thanks Tara! My new principal noticed the drama program for the first time and it was positive! Yeah! Today we have understudy rehearsal, which goes reasonably well. This production is the first time I plan to have the understudy cast perform. They are all seniors and deserving.

March 4

Darryl is due today at 7:00 am to hang. I have not seen a plot. I have cancelled rehearsal so he can get in and do the hang in one day. He is bringing two assistants who he is very confidant of. Kari is cranking on costumes. Her designs are creative, awe-inspiring and made out of things like shower curtains and X-mas tinsel. She and Tara work well together and are happy clams in the back vom. Kari would like me to send my third period students to the library, “Susan, how do you get anything done?” I think she is finding it hard to work with 40+ students in the room, welcome to teaching, Kari! Kari has taken her VW van to San Diego Stage and Lighting to rent $500.00 worth of equipment that Darryl needs. I check my personal savings account for funds if the show goes over budget. Kari’s parents have lent her the van, which has been invaluable for transporting materials. Derek and I are in a bidding war over it, but Kari’s father has too many hippie memories attached to it to let it go. It becomes kind of a mascot for the production.

March 5

Anger, panic, despair, exhaustion. The hang last night was a disaster. At 12:30 am, I told Darryl he should go. The parents of the two girls he brought down from L.A. were upset and were not aware they were in San Diego. I am now faced with reworking what Darryl started, trying to create some sense of design and have lost 4 dimmers due to
improper patching. I’m freaked. I cannot even follow Darryl’s plot because there never was a plot. Kari listened to me spew until 1:30 last night. She advised I call Derek, which I will do.

March 6

Derek returned my call, calmed me down and helped me see light at the end of the tunnel. Man, did I get lucky when we became friends. Though Derek bops along casually in everyday life, he is very focused and caring when the chips are down. Thank you, Derek, thank you Universe.

March 5, 6 and 7

Kari and I sleep in the theater all weekend. We make beds out of air mattresses and old futons. We raid the prop cabinet for blankets and pillows. Kari sews and I climb the ladder 3 million times. I decide to start over, as that will be less confusing. At Derek’s urging, I have rented a traveling dimmer system and asked an old lighting student of mine if he will run the second board off stage for me. I strip the grid, I rehang, I patch, I focus, I drop color and I return all of the rental lighting ($500.00) to SD Stage and Lighting as it is not needed. My friend in the rental dept. rips up the rental bill and says, “I thought it was overkill for your facility”. Thank you Universe.

March 8

Our first audience is this Friday. We are not ready. I am attending a mandatory Faculty meeting, while my AD runs tech rehearsal. After the meeting, I run up to the theater to discover the entire cast standing outside the theater. Melissa says, “Ms. Stratton, it’s all under control, don’t worry, there’s a fire in the theater.” Six alarms go off in my skull. I run into the building to find Julio, Jeff, John and Paul climbing on the grid, sniffing like animals. The smell is obvious; there is definitely an electrical fire in the building. “We already turned off the breakers, Ms. Stratton.” I guess the theater safety lectures paid off. “And we called the fire dept.” Good kids. I hustle them out, they forgot “don’t be a hero,” but they’ve done well. The fire department determines the air conditioning unit that cools the theater has burned up and they compliment the kids on their handling of the situation. My next thought is a theater full of senior citizens having heat stroke during Friday’s performance. I beg my head custodian to rush the repair. We open the doors of the theater and rehearse without tech.

March 9

Mike picks up and drives snow machines to the theater and we add them to tech. They are too cool. I have one hung over the stage and one hung over the audience. Sitting in the audience, you get a three-dimensional effect as you look through layers of snow. Expensive, but worth it. The environmental changes are shocking to the characters of the play and I want the audience to have a similar experience. Snow inside a building is definitely surprising and fun.
March 11

I go to the doctor at Kari’s urging. My right knee is killing me. Dr. Deckert tells me to stay off the ladder. “I can’t,” I wail. She opens up her date book and says, “So, when would you like to schedule your knee surgery?” I get the point. Rehearsal is solid. I realize the kids have been driving the show pretty well the last two weeks, despite the many technical problems. Instead of making her usual cross, Tanya, a penguin, climbs the slide and goes down belly first, Marcie, the second penguin, follows. They crack us up. I am delighted. I’ve been looking at that slide and blocking actors on it for weeks now, but it never occurred to me to have penguins slide down belly first, as penguins do. I’ve been blinded by the lights, literally.

March 12

YMCA Senior performance goes well. Seniors really enjoy the show. The air conditioner motor has been replaced and is working. They are familiar with Jason and Hercules and Cyclops so they get the jokes. Kids are pumped and I realize how much they have wanted an audience. Snow machine fails. “What can betray you, will betray you” – Mack’s old saying about theatre.

March 13 and 14

Kari and I sleep in the theatre again. This time to paint stars on the proscenium, plus we are in such a zone we can’t see any other option. Sleeping on the floor of the theater, working around the clock and eating Mexican take-out from Lolita’s with the school’s stray cat have become our lives.

March 15

School performances. All go well. Castle Park loves the show. The students get very excited when Spanish is used on stage. Their view of theatre is formal, stuffy and “white.” They love it when it reaches them. We finally figure out the snow machines. Fog machine craps out on us. Damn I hate that big, hulky, metal machine; Sue Raley brings a backup machine one of her students will loan us that kicks butt over my more expensive and unreliable one. She also brings her husband to do a photo shoot. Kari runs the shoot. I crash on the office couch. I can’t keep my eyes open.

Opening Night

A disappointment. And a shock. My kids have NEVER turned in a performance so mediocre. There is no life, no spark, no energy. I go back at intermission, as is my practice, and tell them it’s a “D-” and that I’ve never seen such a lack of cohesiveness from them. I work hard to deliver this news in an honest and impassive mode. As a teacher, I feel it is important to never lie about what I witness and to also relay negative feedback with no emotional charge. They are in shock. They know they suck. They all
stare at the floor. Melissa is the only one who will look at me. She shakes her head slowly in disbelief and whispers, “we worked so hard.” Welcome to directing, Melissa. I remind the cast to listen to each other. 2nd act is not much better. They can’t climb out of the psychological hole of failure quick enough to save the show. I’m buming big time.

Wednesday Night – Understudy Night

Earlier in class, the cast talks about what happened on stage last night. No one seems to know what went wrong. After 24 hours, I realize what was wrong was Viri. She wasn’t in drive mode and she wasn’t listening to her fellow actors. Mari drives the whole play and she is onstage in every moment. Viri is unable to see how her energy level brought the play down. The cast is reluctant to pin it on her, but I can tell they agree. I keep the talk positive and tell everyone there are nights in the theatre like that. Let it go. Tonight’s a new night. I can feel everyone’s apprehension because Carmen and Misael are playing the leads. Their eyes are wide. Tension is in the air.

The performance is phenomenal! It turns out to be the best performance of the run. Everyone’s fear and commitment to success pushed the show into a hyper reality, which is perfect for Rivera’s works. The kids were really fighting for a win. And they got it. It was live, it was spontaneous and it was edgy – just what theatre was meant to be. I could tell it broke Viri’s heart. She wanted to deliver Maricela, but it was a good lesson for her to learn. You can’t get complacent on the stage.

Thursday Night – Wes Performance

Kari escorts Wes from his hotel to the theater in the VW. He manages to remain dignified in the front seat of the VW wearing his trench coat. I’m a whacked out emotional mess. Of course, I don’t realize just how whacked I am, but on a scale of 1 to 10, I’m an 11. Wes wants to sit on the aisle. I’ve already made arrangements with Kari to NOT allow this. He is to sit under the snow machine. $300.00 for a special effect, he’s going to get snowed on in the middle of the house, in his trench coat, whether he likes it or not. He likes it. He smiles as the snow floats down on his trench covered shoulders. The performance goes well. Kids hold back a bit. They know Wes is here and how important this night is to me and they fear making a mistake. But it’s a solid show.

Closing Night

Closing night is a little loose. It always is. How do you stop egos from savoring the moment? I give the “if you find yourself saying goodbye to the moment, you’re not where you should be” speech. Show is good and audience receptive. Valentina, who plays Loki, really hits it tonight. After the show, she’s excited for her success. She knows she did well. Sergio, my videotape man, doesn’t show. Later I find out he has mistakenly jotted down the wrong date. It is the final technical snafu. I go into my office, shut the door and cry. The house is filling up with excited theaegores and I continue to cry. My knee hurts. I have insisted on wearing heels, over Kari’s
protestations. I am mentally and physically exhausted. I can't deal with another person letting me down. I look up and John Baxter's mother is standing over me in concern. I explain to her about my missing videotape man. "Oh, honey, Mr. Baxter is a great videotaper. We'll give you a copy of our tape and you can send that to your committee." I smile at her good will and the thought of my committee watching yet another bad video job. "That's more like it. Remember now, you're Ms. Stratton. You've got to go out there and tell everybody how hard the kids worked and to turn off their pagers." She's right, I do. And so I did.
March 29, 2004

MARICELA DE LA LUZ LIGHTS THE WORLD by Jose Rivera at Castle Park High School, Chula Vista, California

Viewed Thursday night, March 18, 2004

Directed by Susan Stratton in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Master of Arts in Theatre Production

MARICELA DE LA LUZ is not a widely produced play, especially not in high schools. While the story is charming, the "restrictive element" is the technical requirement. However, the play boasts a lovely metaphor and abounds with opportunities for young actors. All can enjoy and learn from these characters and story.

Susan has conquered the difficult technical effects and offers a first-rate high school production. She remains as true to the script as is possible in her small theatre, and the overall look of the show is fabulous. The technical production is strong in all important elements. Supported by her staff (MA candidate colleagues, community members, parents, and a great group of student), the production is made to fit the small CPHS theatre (150 seats tops and doubles as a classroom) and the action flows very nicely. In fact, the pacing is one of the real strengths of the production.

My comments about the quality of the show are based on comparison to similar master's thesis productions around the country.

Of considerable importance for this play is the ability of the director to draw truthful performances from the actors. This is a huge task in high school theatre, as the director often must teach basic acting before she can begin on the play that is in rehearsal, and she must work with those students who are available and willing to make a serious commitment to a lengthy rehearsal period. As with dance, music, art, and some sports, theatre provides a clear measurement of achievement, as the director/performer responds to training and demonstrates learning. The demonstration is in the public arena. In high school theatre, especially if the director selects to produce a difficult work, all of her strengths and weaknesses are displayed to the public!
Susan's production is extremely successful in most areas. Of special importance is the invaluable learning experience the production has been for the students. They've learned how to evaluate and improve speaking skills, how to understand play structure, basic acting, technology, design, integration of all elements to create harmony, and probably won't realize the extent of their learning and growth for many years. But one day they will look back on this experience and realize what a successful production they assembled.

The overall design and technology of the production is very strong, with all elements blending nicely. Credit goes to Susan for the lighting and set designs (with consultation from Kari Glass, Derek Lane, and Darryl Hovis), Valentina Mandarin and Bernie Toledo for excellent sound design and execution (operated by Mariano Robles), assistant director and stage management (the program is unclear about this) is by Melissa Wiggins, and the crew who ran the show.

But special attention and credit is paid to Kari Glass for the costume and puppet design and construction (with some consultation by Tara Wilde). I especially admired the intent of the set and effect of the costumes. They support the play and the actors in necessary and helpful ways. Kari created some absolutely wonderful costumes – especially Cyclops, Loki, Ofelia, and Snow Woman. I also loved the masks and puppets – especially the snake and the wolf masks. While the setting, based on a playground, creates a fine environment for the action, the costumes clearly identify character traits, and time and place, where appropriate. Among the many effects, I especially like the snow in the audience and good fog when needed. I love the pre-show, intermission, and scene change music.

The people who worked on props should take a bow, as these are well selected or built and add to the authenticity of the period.

The floor plan is excellent and allows the director to move actors around gracefully, which she does, using all corners and elevations of the set, and creating many lovely pictures. Overall, the environment is quite workable for this production. The walls and floors are well painted, sturdy, and nothing shakes or look unstable.

Susan does her best with the limited lighting system – of which some was borrowed – and as budget becomes available in the school system, some help might be forthcoming in that area. Students can learn lighting and lighting design, electricity and control, color and color design, and the proper equipment could open up some career choices for the students.
Acting, as in all high school productions, varies from experienced to beginner—and that is as it should be. Viridiana Tapia is charming in the title role, and Marcus Fisher is solid as her brother. The entire ensemble works well together, seems especially well disciplined, never misses a cue, and makes the audience entirely comfortable. Valentina Mandarin’s Loki is easy to remember, as is Ofelia (played by Denise Diaz and Reyna Galvan—yes, it’s a two headed goddess). Jeffrey Ferrer, Julio Jacobo, John Baxter, Paul Neubrand, and Erick Escalante offered fine supporting characters. However, everyone does their job and everyone captures a sense and spirit of the character they portray.

Susan herself is a wonderful professional actor. One can see the control and techniques she communicated to the young cast. I’m sure she will agree that most of her actors need more specific training in end of line support, as many lines are delivered with falling inflections. To the credit of the director, there is very little stressing of pronouns—which I very much appreciate. Class time, and out-of-class time, for more truth exercises would be useful for the entire acting ensemble, and for all acting students in the program. These are techniques that can be learned and improved, if time is available. Projection is never a problem. The more Susan can work with these actors, the better the productions will become. But this production sets the bar pretty high for the shows that will follow.

Susan’s skills include an excellent sense of tempo and energy, which the show has, and for the most part the elimination of “let’s pretend,” the nemesis of amateur theatre. There’s none of that, and this draws a great bravo! from me. Susan knows what she’s doing, and this production leaves no doubt about that.

One of Susan’s jobs as director is to apply what she is learning in the master’s program to her production. This challenge can often be very difficult, especially when working with young students. But creating a real experience has to be the goal and CPHS has created a real experience. I look forward to seeing another show in the future.

I enjoyed my evening; it was nice seeing concessions set up for the patrons, I liked the publicity that was widespread in the community and the news release that was circulated, liked the director’s program note, and found the experience overall a first-rate drama program. Thanks for the lovely evening.

Sincerely,

Wesley Van Tassel, Ph.D.
Professor

Please note:
This signature has been redacted due to security reasons.
Final Self-evaluation

I feel very positive about my direction of *Maricela de la Luz Lights the World*. Producing theater at a resource-strapped high school always presents a creative challenge, and this production’s challenges were higher than any we had attempted in the past. I was very pleased with the overall look of the play and with all of the technical elements that supported the story. The production’s biggest strength was its professional pace and the realization of technical elements in our limited venue. This success was the result of strong commitments from cast, technicians and designers. Though there were times when I felt a crisis would stop production, cast and crew found their way around the obstacle and continued toward artistic growth. Creatively solving the challenges of *Maricela de la Luz Lights the World* became the hallmark of our experience, and “What next?” the show motto. As a teacher, I feel problem-solving is a valuable lesson. This production gave our students plenty of opportunity to acquire and practice that skill.

It is Jose Rivera’s belief that every play should have one undoable element to press the creators of theatre into a new realm of thinking. His undoable element in *Maricela de la Luz Lights the World* is Maricela’s flight, a crucial element illustrating Maricela’s ego development. When my students and I began our journey, we could only see one solution, which was technically impossible in our venue and if it were, would cost us our production budget for the next two years. So—flying Maricela by cable—the obvious solution, was out of the question. Our final solution to the flight problem was simple. We relied on the audience’s imagination and one black light to lend the moment a bit of surrealism. We also put the responsibility on the actors, working with their focus and vocal quality, to portray the illusion of flight. But before we settled on our final
history and our place in it. At first glance, it appears age-appropriate for high school actors, since the leads are children and the archetypical characters tend toward fantasy. But fantasies and fairytales are deceptively complex.

Professional actors could better realize the ideas and words of Rivera’s play. That is what professional actors do and why we are awestruck by a good performance. My students are not professionals. The majority of them had not been to a professional play until this last fall, October 2003, when I was given the money to take them to The La Jolla Playhouse, where we watched a superb production of The Comedy of Errors. My students fulfilled their roles to the best of their ability. I watched them grow into their characters and fill the space occupied by Gods. I watched their confidence soar and their faces take on a proud “I’m an actor” look. This is not false pride; their growth was phenomenal and their characters taught them how to live large and passionately. They just have so far to go—to grow and live. As a high school teacher I ask myself, “Who had the better artistic experience?” The actor who has played several leading roles and is in the lead again? Or the student who speaks no English and learns his lines phonetically, who drills them over and over with the goal to not sound like a second-language speaker? Who grows more? Who truly experiences the art of acting? And every time I return to the answer, They both do. Neither experience is better than the other; both actors are experiencing what they need to experience at this moment in their lives. Martha Graham, the great modern dancer, once said:

There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you all the time, this expression is unique and if you block it, it will never exist thru any other medium, and be
lost. The world will not have it. It is not your business to determine how good it is, nor how it compares with other expressions. It is your business to keep it yours clearly and directly, to keep the channel open.

You do not even have to believe in yourself or your work. You have to keep open and aware directly to the urges that motivate you. Keep the channel open.

No artist is pleased. There is no satisfaction whatever, at any time. There is only a queer, divine dissatisfaction, a blessed unrest that keeps us marching and makes us more alive than others (Graham).

This quote is pinned to my bulletin board at work. It explains why I create theatre, where I create theatre, and who I create theatre for.


<http://www.performink.com/Archives/stagepersonae/2003/RiveraJose.html>


MATH IN ARCHITECTURE AND ART

BY

MARCELA KALANDEK

(in partial fulfillment for final in A.P. Calculus)
Math in Architecture

Statement of the Task:

According to Webster's, architecture is, “the art and science of designing and erecting buildings;” but they forgot the most important thing, architecture is an art based on important concepts in math.

The building of play sets from ideas or drawings, even scaled ones, is no easy task. I have chosen to calculate and analyze the mathematical uses and concepts needed to build a set that is stable enough for people to walk/play on. The set has been built, and I am going to take all the measurements and explain why/how it works. I will use a tape measure and take all necessary measurements of the set, which is a hexagonal gazebo with monkey bars, a “plank” (or ramp), and a slide.

Focusing on the ramp, the floor of the gazebo, and the area around and including the slide, not only do the measurements for all pieces and dimensions of the set have to work, it also has to be able to fully support the weight of up to six people at a time. For this to happen, the wood pieces that act as floors have to have support beams; and pieces that are at a slant for any support beam, have to be at the right angle.
Math in Architecture

Data Collection:

Here are diagrams with the measurements that have been recorded:

(Diagrams not to scale)
Data Collection (cont)

Support Angles:

Support Beams:

All floor wood is 5/8 of an inch thick, nailed perpendicularly to a board, which in most cases is 5 3/8 inches wide by 1 1/2 inches thick; other support beams are 1 1/2 inches thick by 3 1/2 inches wide.
Math in Architecture

Analysis:

The hexagonal floor of the gazebo is a perfect hexagon with 120 degree angles, and each side was 3 feet, 6 inches.

The flooring around the slide was mostly squares, most corners were 90 degree angles except for the cutout for the top of the slide. Support beams were placed 22 1/2 inches apart under the hexagon and 15 1/2 inches apart on the top flooring.
Math in Architecture

Analysis (cont)

The angles for the ramp and the slide were found using trigonometry, they make right angles with the ground they are on, thus enabling us to use right triangle trigonometry; (all answers are to three significant figures)

The ramp:

\[ \sin x = \frac{20 \ 11/16}{88} \]
\[ \sin x = 0.235 \]
\[ x = \sin^{-1}(0.235) \]
\[ x = 13.6^\circ \]
\[ \cos y = \frac{20 \ 11/16}{88} \]
\[ \cos y = 0.235 \]
\[ y = \cos^{-1}(0.235) \]
\[ y = 76.4^\circ \]
\[ 13.6^\circ + 76.4^\circ = 90^\circ \]
Math in Architecture

Analysis (cont)

The slide:

\[
\begin{align*}
\sin x &= \frac{52}{112} \\
\sin x &= 0.464 \\
x &= \sin^{-1}(0.464) \\
x &= 27.7^\circ \\
\cos y &= \frac{52}{112} \\
\cos y &= 0.464 \\
y &= \cos^{-1}(0.464) \\
y &= 62.3^\circ \\
27.7 + 62.3 &= 90^\circ
\end{align*}
\]
Math in Architecture

Evaluation:

So, in order to correctly and safely build this set, support beams were built under the floors of the gazebo and top level by the slide. Since the area by the slide was higher up from the ground, the support beams were placed only 15 1/2 inches apart, while the support beams for under the gazebo were built 22 1/2 inches apart. These beams were necessary to support the flooring because the wood that is the flooring is around 1/2 of an inch, and with the gazebo, for instance, being from 6 feet and 13/16 of an inch, to 7 feet across, the wood board could not safely support the weight of more than one person.

In order for the ramp and slide to work, the 7 foot 4 inch piece of wood for the ramp has to make a 76.4 degree angle with the side of the gazebo, and a 13.6 degree angle with the ground. For the 9 foot 4 inch slide to work, the top of the slide has to make a 62.3 degree angle with the railed level of flooring, and a 27.7 degree angle with the ground.

Math makes architecture and construction work.
MARICELA DE LA LUZ LIGHTS THE WORLD COSTUME DESIGNS

BY

KARI GLASS
Maricela Costumes

Polar Bear

LED lights in eye sockets
Flexible spine
Clear past log and hanging ribs
Crutch

Head maneuvered w/ one hand and forepaws w/
Michelle Romo as the Polar Bear
Maricela Costumes

Penguins

[Image of a drawing of penguins]
Tania Hagel and Marcie Kalandek as the Penguins
Maricela Costumes

Xbalanque

MAYAN HERO TWIN
MOON GOD
Maricela Costumes

Denise Diaz and Reyna Galvan as Ofelia, the two-headed Border Goddess
Maricela Costumes
Julio Jacobo as the Cyclops
Maricela Costumes

HERACLES
LION HELMET + CAPE
Erick Escalante as Hercules with his Nemean Lion skin cape
Maricela Costumes

GREEK CHITON

ARGO PROW
Michelle Romo as the Argo Prow Figurehead
Maricela Costumes

WOLF
(7 wolves) Actors in Black

Plastic Wolf Mask

Fabric Wolf Cape

Wolf Gloves

Wolf Socks
Maricela Costumes

Marcie Kalandek, Lourdes Perez, Carmen Ruiz, Tania Hagel, Lisa Smith, Rosario Hernandez, and Bernie Toledo as the Wolves

http://www.kariglass.com/wolves1.html
HYDRA

IS MADE LIKE THE YELLOW SNAKE
7 DIFFERENT ACTORS WHO WILL END UP TOGETHER AND ARE JOINED BY A SINGLE TAIL.
Maricela Costumes
FOG

Seven Dancers cloaked in black—
slowly roll and manipulate 3 yards
of purple tulle with fluid continuous
movement while expanding and turning
into the buoyant folds of the fabric.
Maricela Costumes

ADRIANO + ADRIANNA

corugated Plastic
w/laminated icicles and
head - arm - thumb holes
Maricela Costumes

Andre Reynolds and Brandie Paniagua as Adriano and Adriana encased in ice
Maricela Costumes

Yellow Snake

Dryer Vent Tubing

Tummy Fork

are coiled around body
Maricela Costumes

Alex Orsonio as the Snake

http://www.kariglass.com/snake1.html
Maricela Costumes

SNOW QUEEN

LOKI AS THE NORDIC URCHIN
Valentina Mandarin as the Loki the Nordic Trickster God, disguised as a Snow Woman
Maricela Costumes

HUNAPU
MAYAN HERO TWIN
SUN GOD
Jeffrey Ferrer as Hunapu, the Mayan Sun God
Maricela Costumes

SNOW PEOPLE
XMAS MALL SHoppers

Sign boards:
Plasti, Snowman, Outdoor Decorations
XMAS Shopping Bags
Robust Oakmen Advertising for local businesses
Nite Walk shoes for entire family; fast if we do product placement

Drawn with plastic snowmen

Go back in the wall? Doors / compartment on back panels.

Floor cover

Are you showing clothes as the kids get lost?

Change to ASC?

Istn't the floor water? During ASC?

CanHydro exit DSC?

Hi from Helm

Silver primer paint plastic

Hide Black Legs with Plastic
SNOW IN DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO, QUE?

If You Go:
What: “Maricela de la Luz Lights the World” a play by Jose Rivera
When: 7:00 p.m. March 16, 17, 18 and 19
Where: Castle Park High School, The Bob Eubanks Theater
Tickets: $6.00 at the door, $5.00 presale, General Seating. ASB and Thespian discount. For more information, call (619) 427-2026.

If snow in San Diego isn’t a clue that you’ve entered a parallel universe, maybe meeting a Mayan moon god and Hercules is.

“Maricela de la Luz Lights the World,” will be presented by Castle Park High School’s Drama Dept. March 16, 17, 18, and 19. The story centers around a little girl named Maricela who undertakes a magical journey to save San Diego. The sun god has been kidnapped and thus snow is falling in San Diego. Accompanied by her little brother, Riccardo, Maricela sets off on a quest to find the sun god and set him free. Along the way, the siblings meet many mythical creatures, including, a two-headed U.S./Mexico borderer goddess, famous Greek heroes from antiquity, a seven-headed hydra, penguins, talking snowmen and wandering polar bears. The children learn that “evil flourishes when good people do nothing” and when they confront the challenges presented to them, they discover their own inner hero.

Not just a great story with a good moral for children, “Maricela de la Luz Lights the World” has a message that will be enjoyed by all ages.

“Maricela de la Luz Lights the World” is directed by CPHS Drama Director Susan Stratton. Maricela is played by Viridiana Tapia and Riccardo de la Luz is played by Marcus Fisher. Other cast members include: Valentina Mandarin, John Baxter, Denise Diaz, Jeffrey Ferrer, Erick Escalante, Reina Galvan, Julio Jacobo, Paul Neubrand, Alex Osornio, Brandi Paniagua, Andre Reynolds, Michelle Romo, Misael Diaz, Carmen Ruiz, Briana Castro, Damon Campbell, Rosario Hernandez, Thao Ngo, Tony Barnes, Lourdes Perez, Lisa Smith, Bernie Toledo, Sarah Vold, Marcela Kalandek and Tania Hagel.
Special Thanks

Tina Breen
Maria Castilleja
Sonia Coucino
Joel Curtis
Sonia Diaz
Miguel Garcia
Jean and Robert Glass
Kari Glass
Michael Good
Thomas Harold
Darryl Hovis

Jesse Laks
Derek Lane
Sylvia Lynn
Lori Pass
Daniel Salas
Susan Raley Salas
Scott Robinson
Kimiko Rosas
Barbara Spooner
Wesley Van Tassel
Tomiko Viera

Alaska Airlines
Castle Park P.E. Department
Chula Vista Target
Chula Vista Wal-Mart
Costa Canyon High School Drama Department
CWU Drama Department
IATSE Local 918
See's Candies
South Bay YMCA
Terra Nova Subway

Graphic Services donated by Tara Wilde of Wilde Design
twilde@www.notbeforenoon.com

MARICELA DE LA LUZ
LIGHTS THE WORLD
by
Jose Rivera
A Note From the Director

“Tell me a story!” It’s a request parents have heard at bedtime for sons. But when Adena Rivera asked her father Jose for a story, the result was “Maricela de la Luz Lights the World.” Each evening Adena would eagerly tell her papi about the new god or goddess they had studied in school that day, and her father would weave the god into her ongoing bedtime story about a little girl named Maricela who was learning to battle the “demons of the collective unconscious.”

Luckily for us, Mr. Rivera published his daughter’s bedtime story in play format for all to enjoy and learn from. Better yet, he set his final version of “Maricela” in San Diego, your home town.

The creation of theatre is not a singular effort and this production is no exception. Like Maricela, we have been helped along by some extraordinary beings, who stand god-like in the world of theatre: costume designer, Kari Glass and set designer, Derek Lane. My students and I have all benefitted from their tremendous artistic talents, unfettered imagination and loving encouragement. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with artists of such high caliber and we hope this production will spur you to high flights of imagination.

Let us tell you a story...

Cast

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maricela</td>
<td>Viridiana Tapia*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maricela Understudy</td>
<td>Carmen Ruiz*</td>
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<td>Ricardo</td>
<td>Marcus Fisher*</td>
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<td>Missel Diaz</td>
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<td>Xibalbique/Hunapu</td>
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<td>Ofelia</td>
<td>Denise Diaz (South Side)</td>
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<td>Reyna Galvan (North Side)</td>
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<td>John Baxter*</td>
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<td>Orpheus</td>
<td>Paul Neubrand*</td>
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<td>Heracles</td>
<td>Erick Hescalante</td>
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<td>Tania Hagel</td>
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<td>Marioela</td>
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Shoppers and Snow People

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