

ISAZA

(epitaph for Papa)

A monodrama for alto/actress, percussion/DJ, computer system

Stage

Rear projected background of low-end bar setting derived from actual shots of “Bar Latin” on rue St. Laurent, Montreal.

Chair, table, liquor bottles, glasses. All rather cheap and messy.

Lighting design to “follow” Louisa throughout the piece as she stands, sits, moves, dances...

Setting

Percussionist is on stage. Costumes reminiscent of the “tropical style” or “lounge” music.

Soloist is off-stage. Dressed in colour full costume that includes “slit skirt/dress” but initially covered. Plus some type of “cubana” style hat or scarf. (Soloist has a wireless microphone that could be partially concealed by headpiece)

INTRODUCTION

Percussion and dancers

SCENE 1 – BAR

Louisa: (starting off-stage)

It's hot in here, Papa.

Sweat is beading, first like dew, then dripping, dripping like hot rain on my neck

Too many people on this dance floor, too many in this bar,

too many lonely faces watching me.

I'm dancing as fast as I can so their eyes don't touch me,

Bailo al pulso del latido de mi corazon.

To the sound of my heart *cha cha cha*.

To the sound of my heart;

to the mem'ry of a sound in Cuba,

here as cha cha,

there as rushing boots,

shining black thick soles,

marching in front of workers in Havana.

I spin to glimpse myself in the mirror, but you're there, and your ghost whispers:
"Louisa, you look foolish, you look old."

(lights down on Louisa)

SCENE 2 – BAR

(Different projected background, lights. Louisa is seated at the table and chair. Sips from her drink looking out at the dance floor....)

Louisa: (Singing gently.)

Roberto is here.

Come Roberto.

Come dance with me, your mama.

Soy tu Mama quien te quiere tanto.

Come... *one, two...*

In his head, too, there is nothing but a pulse, tonight or any night.

Papa, you don't know him -- born after you left Cuba.

I have a retarded son, Papa.

He is 35 years old, shrivelled and childlike,
but close to death.

Papa, there's nothing you know about me,

Except that this man who has just asked me to dance
this man who could be you.

one and two and...

Oh, it's hot in here.

No open windows.

It's February yet it's hot and

I'm dancing the cha cha with the grinning ghost of my father.

Rum is sneaking up behind my eyes.

SCENE 3 – BAR

Louisa: (Recit)

Roberto dances alone.

He likes to repeat the name of the bar:

"Isaza," he says,

Issazzzzaaaaa."

He doesn't like to be left at home.

He knew his father even less than I knew you.

His father took him from me and brought him here, to Montreal, the he died

Leaving Roberto alone.

We married in Cuba, then Roberto was born.
after hearing Fidel read a letter from Che that closed with,
"Ever onward to victory; homeland or death,"
my husband fled taking our three year-old son
I remained on the dock at Camarioca
alone in Havana.
Now I'm dancing like a three-legged jackal...
one, two, three, one, two, three...
At home is a Havana you would not recognize.
Where they are dancing, still dancing
Yes, they are still dancing the cha cha.

SCENE 4 – BAR

Louisa:

I'm hot.
I want to go back...
to dive under the skirt of my mother and wait for you to come home.
Instead, I dance
I cannot return.
I left my home... and now...
I dance...
I dance...
with strangers in a bar.
I dance..., I dance...
I will not buy a t-shirt with Che's face fading from the front.
I will not flaunt my passport on the beach.
My body always comes back to this beat
and returns to this bar
smiling face of a demon,
We meet in the vortex of our own pulses and these drums.
Grinning ghost of my father, I must sit down now.
I'm hot and tired
I will go outside into February snow
It begins in rain as the world began in rain
Until waters part and I am found fossilized,
stuck to the side of the mountain,
dancing to the rumble of a dead heart.
Come Roberto. Let's go home.

THE END