THE PLAY
Meet the Playwright
Key Terms
The Cuban Revolution
Profile: Fidel Castro
Profile: Celia Sánchez
Cuba-U.S. Relations
Asylum-Seekers at the Peruvian Embassy and the Mariel Boatlift
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THE PLAY
Fidel Castro, the political leader of Cuba and its revolution, is celebrating. Cuba's support of the socialists in Angola (see article) is succeeding and, to him, it represents Cuba's growing influence and power in the world.

Celia Sánchez, his fellow revolutionary and most trusted political advisor, wants him to focus on his upcoming speech to the United Nations. She also urges him to face the realities in Cuba, where the people are clamoring for change and freedom. Fidel refuses.

Consuelo, a spy and Fidel's protégée, arrives. She tells Fidel that Manolo, a former revolutionary, is in Havana to meet with him. Manolo now works for the U.S. government and is in Cuba on behalf of President Carter to discuss ending the trade embargo.

Their meeting is interrupted with startling news: hundreds of Cubans have stormed the Peruvian embassy in Havana, asking the Peruvian government to help them leave Cuba. Will Fidel be able to cooperate with Celia, Manolo and Consuelo to find a solution? What will be the fate of the thousands of Cubans who want to leave? And what will be the legacy of the revolution?

“But, things are changing. People that grew up under our revolution are unhappy. I think we have not given them enough things to dream and work for. They know about the world. And they want their own voice.”

— Celia Sánchez, Celia and Fidel

Celia and Fidel was generously commissioned by Drs. Elliot and Lily Gardner Feldman and BakerHostetler LLP as part of Arena Stage’s Insider Voices Power Play Cycle.

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I’ve been at the mercy of politics my entire life and there has to be a way to step beyond it, to have human interaction.”

He wrote 53 plays. He always took on the challenge of digging into the human interactions of the man behind the man. He has worked as an actor, director and playwright and teacher of playwriting. He deeply affected Machado and his work.

In 1959, when Eduardo Machado was six, the Cuban Revolution overthrew the existing dictator and Fidel Castro took power. Machado says that, at first, his parents approved of Castro, “but six months in, they didn’t pretty harsh.” When Machado was eight, his parents sent him and his younger brother to the U.S. in Operation Peter Pan (see Cuba-U.S. Relations).

The brothers lived with their aunt and uncle in Florida, with no knowledge of English, trying to adjust to a new culture and poverty after living upper-middle-class lives in Cuba. His parents arrived one year later, and the family moved to California. Being uprooted from Cuba when he was a child has deeply affected Machado and his work.

He has worked as an actor, director and filmmaker, but is primarily known as a playwright and teacher of playwriting. Machado says, “I never wasn’t in the theater — since I was a little kid. The house I grew up in in Cuba had a round tank of water that looked like a stage to me, so I started acting out plays when I was like two. I never ever thought of doing anything else.” He has written 33 plays. In Cell 2 and Fidel, Machado explores the characters behind the politics that have shaped his life. He considers Castro to be his most difficult character yet, but he takes on the challenge of digging into the human interactions of the man behind the political turmoil of his childhood.

CUBA

The country of Cuba is made up of about 1,800 islands, most of which are very small. The main island is also called Cuba and it is the largest island in the West Indies, with a coastline of about 3,370 miles. It is 90 miles from Florida.

- The largest city and capital and commercial hub, Havana.
- Cuba has a population of 11,940,000, of which 77% lives in cities.
- About a quarter of the island is covered in mountains and hills. The Sierra Maestra mountain range runs along the southeastern coast for about 150 miles and has the highest peaks.
- The official language is Spanish.
- Cuban culture is a mix of indigenous, African and European cultures, which is reflected in its music. Genres include son, salsa, jazz, nueva tropa and timba.
- Cuba is also known for its beaches, architecture, rum, rum cocktails and cigars.

THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

In 1952, Fulgencio Batista, a former president of Cuba, overthrew the Cuban government and canceled elections. With the support of the United States, he began a military dictatorship. Many Cubans, including Celia Sánchez, were eager to overthrow Batista. Fidel Castro, who had been planning to run for Cuba’s congress, began raising a guerrilla army and emerged as a revolutionary leader. On July 26, 1953 — a date that would become synonymous with the revolution — Castro, his brother (Raul), and more than 100 others attacked the Moncada military barracks in Cuba’s second largest city, Santiago. According to Jack A. Goldstone in Revolution: A Very Short Introduction, nearly half the rebels were killed and the rest were captured and sentenced to 15 years in prison. At his trial, Castro announced, “History will absolve me.”

A year and a half later, Batista released the rebels in an attempt to improve his image. The Castro brothers fled to Mexico, where they met Che Guevara, a Marxist revolutionary from Argentina. Celia Sánchez and other revolutionaries still in Cuba planned and prepared for the Castro return. On December 2, 1956, 82 revolutionaries arrived from Mexico in a yacht called the Granma. They arrived later than planned and were immediately ambushed by Batista’s army. The few survivors escaped into the Sierra Maestra mountains and started recruiting peasants as guerrilla fighters, enticing them with promises of land reform, education and healthcare. From 1957 to 1958, Batista became increasingly brutal, torturing and executing hundreds of activists who opposed him. In 1958, U.S. President Eisenhower stopped sending weapons to Batista. When the guerrilla army attacked, Batista’s troops refused to fight and Batista fled.

Castro became Cuba’s leader with widespread support. Goldstone writes, Once in power, Castro started nationalizing foreign business operations, meaning that he took them away from private owners and made them the property of the Cuban government. He also made land reforms and started programs to improve literacy and healthcare. Almost two years after he took power, Castro began using the word “communist” to describe the new Cuba.

KEY TERMS

SOCIALISM
A social theory and system of organization in which all property, land and resources belong to the community as a whole.

COMMUNISM
A political and economic system that aims to eliminate social classes through government ownership of industry and resources. Communism is a type of socialism. Communist countries are often run by a single political party or leader. In the 20th century, nearly 40 percent of the world’s population lived under communism, but now there are only five communist countries: Cuba, China, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam accounting for 19 percent of the population.

CAPITALISM
A range of economic systems based on private control of property and resources, competition and individual choice. The United States is one of many capitalist countries.

ASYLUM
Protection, especially given by a nation or embassy to political refugees. The United States is one of many capitalist countries.

GUERRILLA WARFARE
A type of irregular warfare, often using hit-and-run tactics, in which small groups of combatants fight a larger, more traditional military.

FIDEL CASTRO
Fidel Castro Ruz was the leader of the Cuban Revolution and a divisive figure in international politics. He established a one-party, socialist government in Cuba, which he led from 1959 to 2011. Some revered him as a charismatic freedom fighter. Others saw him as the dictator of a totalitarian regime. He was known for giving speeches that lasted hours.

Born in 1926, Castro was the third of his mother’s seven children. He excelled in the Catholic schools he attended, and he studied law at the University of Havana. After graduating, he intended to run for congress in 1952, but was thwarted when former President Fulgencio Batista seized power and canceled the elections.

On July 26, 1953, Castro led an attack on a military base and, although he and his collaborators were arrested, he became the leader of a new revolutionary movement. After his release from prison, he led a successful revolution to overthrow Batista and established himself as commander in chief of the armed forces and prime minister of Cuba. He was not elected. Supporters of Batista’s government were imprisoned and, according to an article in The Independent, at least 180 were shot by firing squads.

Castro sought to build a new Cuban government on Marxist ideologies, believing that the only way to free Cuba from foreign economic interests was to build a strictly socialist economic system. He took over people’s privately-owned businesses and made them the property of the Cuban government. He redistributed land by limiting the amount a person could own, made private schools public, brought electricity to the countryside and started literacy programs. He formed an alliance with the Soviet Union and influenced communist and socialist revolutions throughout the world.

Castro also punished Cuban citizens who spread counterrevolutionary ideas. He jailed thousands of political opponents, sent gay people to “reeducation camps,” censored journalists and free speech, and refused to hold elections. In 1964 he acknowledged holding 15,000 political prisoners. His control over all aspects of Cuba isolated the nation and curtailed economic freedoms, causing poverty, deprivation and fear. Over 1 million Cubans left the country, some risking their lives on rafts.

Castro also trained spies within communities and created a Cuban intelligence agency that infiltrated the U.S. government and Cuban communities in the U.S. Castro personally managed the spy operations.

According to the head of his secret police, Castro avoided an estimated 638 assassination attempts.

In 2008, Castro announced that he would not serve another term as president, and in 2011, he stepped down as secretary-general of the Communist Party of Cuba. He was succeeded by his brother, Raul. Castro died in 2016.
In Cuba, Celia Sánchez Manduley is the famous, even mythic maternal figure of the revolution. In the rest of the world, she is virtually unknown. Born in Media Luna, Cuba in 1920, she was the fourth of eight children. Her mother, Ofelia Sánchez de Manduley, was a devoted Catholic who joined the Spanish Civil War to fight for the Republicans. Sánchez was the only doctor in town and he was known for treating anyone who came to him even if they could not pay him. He claimed private businesses in Cuba as government property. In 1960, the U.S. embargo took effect, which allowed her to gather information for Castro. When she died, her funeral was attended by thousands of Cubans and foreign dignitaries. She is often associated with orchids and mariposas.

### Celia Sánchez

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### Celia Sánchez - Life and Legacy

- **Early Life**: Born in Media Luna, Cuba, in 1920, as the fourth of eight children. Her mother, Ofelia Sánchez de Manduley, was a devoted Catholic who joined the Spanish Civil War to fight for the Republicans.
- **Medical Work**: As the only doctor in town, she was known for treating anyone who came to him, even if they could not pay.
- **Revolutionary Role**: She organized rebellions against Batista, recruited guerrilla troops, and led the invasion of the Granma. She was the first woman to fire a gun in the revolution.
- **Political Activities**: After Castro took power, she became his advisor and contributed to the new government and culture in many ways. She worked with architects to plan parks and design government buildings and led the movement for a new Cuban aesthetic. She helped develop the Cohiba cigar brand. She started literacy programs and collected documents to create the official archives of the revolution. She did not like to be the center of attention, which allowed her to gather information for Castro. When she died, her funeral was one of the biggest in Cuban history.
- **Legacy**: She is often associated with orchids and mariposas.

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### Cuba - U.S. Relations

**Bay of Pigs**

In 1960, President Dwight D. Eisenhower approved a plan to train anti-Castro Cuban-Americans to invade Cuba and replace the communist government with a capitalist one. When President John F. Kennedy took office in 1961, he agreed to carry out the plan and chose the Bay of Pigs in southern Cuba as the site of the attack. The invasion was supposed to be kept secret as was the U.S. government's involvement, but Castro learned about the plan and launched a successful counterattack, causing the invasion to fail dramatically.

**Operation Peter Pan**

Between 1960 and 1962, around 14,000 Cuban children were flown to Miami by the U.S. government in a secret program known as “Operation Peter Pan.” The CIA spread rumors in Cuba that the Cuban government was planning to take children away from their parents. In response, thousands of Cuban parents decided that their children would have better lives in the U.S. Some of the children lived with family members already in the U.S., while many went to orphanages and foster families and were not reunited with their parents for many years.

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### The Angolan Civil War and Cuba’s Global Politics

Although small and economically isolated from capitalist global powers like the United States, Cuba had a wide-reaching foreign policy in the 1980s. Cuba supported socialist and communist revolutionary movements around the world and sent military, educational and medical aid abroad that often equaled or even surpassed the foreign aid offered by the United States. In the 1980s, Cuba's largest foreign project was in Angola, a country in Southern Africa. Cuba supported the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). This socialist party won Angola’s revolution in 1975. In 1979, Cuban forces landed in Angola to support the MPLA against the state-backed white minority等方式.

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### Magic Realism in Latin America

“Magic realism” is a term used to describe art, especially literature, that incorporates elements of fantasy or mythology in otherwise realistic narratives in a matter-of-fact way. It is strongly associated with postcolonial Latin American fiction and was coined in the 1940s by the Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier.
HELPFUL HINTS FOR THEATER AUDIENCES

As an audience member at the theater, YOU are part of the show! Just as you see and hear the actors onstage, they can see and hear you in the audience. To help the performers do their best, please remember the following:

• Arrive at least 15 minutes early.
• Visit the restroom before the show starts.
• Sit in the exact seat on your ticket. Ask the usher for help finding it.
• Before the show begins, turn off your phone, watch alarms and any other electronic devices. If anything rings by accident, turn it off immediately.
• Do not use your phone for texts, calls, games or pictures.
• You cannot take pictures or make recordings in the theater, even before or after the play.
• There is no food allowed in the theater.
• Do not talk, whisper, sing or hum, unless invited by the performers to do so.
• Keep your feet on the floor and off the seat in front of you.
• Avoid getting up during a show. If you must leave, wait for a scene change and exit quietly and quickly.
• Respond to the show; you can laugh, cry and gasp. However, don’t repeat lines out loud or talk to the performers on stage.
• Be sure to applaud at the end!

ASYLUM-SEEKERS AT THE PERUVIAN EMBASSY AND THE MARIEL BOATLIFT

On April 1, 1980, six Cubans crashed a bus through the gates of the Peruvian embassy in Havana and claimed asylum. Five days later, 10,000 people had poured into the embassy, all seeking to leave Cuba with the protection of the Peruvian government. On April 20, Fidel Castro announced that anyone could leave Cuba, but only by boat through the Port of Mariel. Thousands of Cubans flooded to the port and many Cuban exiles in Miami traveled to Cuba to pick up their relatives. Most of them wanted to escape economic hardships, but the U.S. government considered them political refugees and, therefore, allowed more immigrants from Cuba than from other Latin American countries. By May 6, over 15,000 Cubans had arrived in Florida. The refugees faced many challenges, including dangerous travel conditions, detention and deportation, riots, and discrimination. Castro also used this as an opportunity to send inmates from prisons and patients from mental asylums to the U.S.

RESOURCES

Dramaturgy by Naysan Mojgani, Dante Flores, Soyica Diggs Colbert, MacKenzie Foy, Fabiola Castro Jimenez, and Taurjhai Purdie

One Day in December: Celia Sanchez and the Cuban Revolution by Nancy Stout

A History of the Cuban Revolution by Aviva Chomsky

Revolutions: A Very Short Introduction by Jack A. Goldstone

Encyclopedia Britannica, Britannica.com

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, jfklibrary.org


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