



My Name is Celia • Me llamo Celia
The Life of Celia Cruz • La vida de Celia Cruz
By Monica Brown, Illustrated by Rafael López



Adapted and Directed by Pilar O'Connell
Choreography by Arlene Martínez-Vázquez

In this **study guide**, you will find information about...

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Meet the Theater Artists

Theater is a group effort! To create each show, many artists must work together to tell the same story. Some of these artists we see. In *My Name is/Me llamo Celia*, we see three actors perform onstage. However, many more artists are involved in the making of each show than the ones we see! Read on to discover a bit about the many people involved in *My Name is/Me llamo Celia* and the work they did for the show.



Marquicia Dominguez, *Celia Cruz*

“QuiQui” (pronounced Key-Key) grew up in Las Vegas, Nevada, but moved to Seattle to study theatre. QuiQui loves to travel and has traveled all over the world. Their favorite country to visit is France. When QuiQui travels, they love to learn about new cultures and see how different cultures share stories with one another. They look forward to sharing the story of Celia Cruz with kids all over Washington.



Tony Magaña, Jr; *Papi, Tito Puente*

Tony grew up in Sunnyside, Washington. He loves to listen to R&B/pop music and perform in plays and musicals. His favorite part about his job is creating with new artists to share stories like this! Celia Cruz’s memories resonate with Tony’s upbringing in a Hispanic home, with a big family. Sharing a story like hers allows us to connect many cultures within the Latin community and celebrate diversity with people of all ages.



Madelaine Figueroa; *Mami, Pedro Knight*

Madelaine spent most of her young adult life touring the U.S. with her folk-musician mother. After spending some time away from performance to complete her college degree and obtain a boat captain’s license, she’s thrilled to be back in the theater world. In her spare time, Madelaine loves to eat yummy food, make films, work on boats, and have spontaneous dance parties.





R. Elisabeth Burton, *Stage Manager*

Lizzy traveled to Cuba a few years ago and loved dancing to salsa music with locals while she was there. Lizzy's favorite part of her stage management job is that she knows where every block, prop, costume piece, and actor is—onstage and offstage—during every part of the play. Knowledge is power! During her free time, Lizzy likes to read Marvel Comics and participate in local advocacy groups.



Pilar O'Connell, *Adaptor/Director*

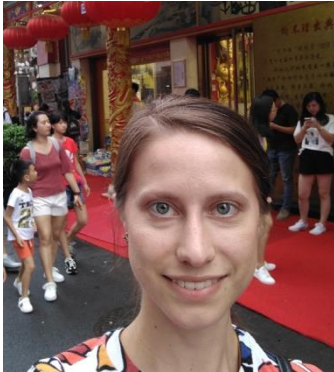
Pilar is a Latinx multi-disciplinary theatre artist from Santa Fe, New Mexico. She graduated Cum Laude from Cornish College of the Arts in 2012. She is the 2018 Recipient of the People's Choice Gregory Award for Outstanding Actor in a play for her performance as Detective Morris in *The Nether* at Washington Ensemble Theatre. She serves as the Associate Artistic Director at Seattle Public Theater. Pilar loves her cat, Mao, who is the fluffiest.



**Arlene Martínez-Vázquez,
*Dramaturg/Choreographer/Language Coach***

Arlene holds a BA in Theatre, Hispano American Literature, and Foreign Languages from the University of Puerto Rico and an MFA in Theatre Directing from Middlesex University. Since moving to Seattle in 2009, she has worked with Book-It Repertory Theatre, Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle Children's Theatre, and Intiman Theatre. Most recently, she held the position of Education Director at Seattle Repertory Theatre. Arlene is a proud member of the advisory committee of the Latinx Theatre Commons. As a bilingual Latina theatre maker, Arlene is passionate about sharing her culture and language as a way to bring people together.





Catherine Cornell, *Set/Props Designer*

Catherine is excited to tell this story because she grew up listening to Celia Cruz. Her family is Puerto Rican but she grew up in Michigan where few people had heard of Celia. Just like azucar reminds Celia of home, her music reminds Catherine of dancing in the living room with her mom!



Natalie Shih, *Costume Designer*

Natalie is so excited to be a part of telling Celia Cruz's story. Growing up in Taiwan, they know how fun it is to learn about different cultures. Their favorite part of their job is being able to share stories like this with other people.



Dayana Capulong, *Sound Designer*

Dayana is a musician and sound designer for film, tv, and theater. They love what they do because they get to use music and sound to help tell stories they really care about. Dayana's favorite part of their job is creating moods and worlds that get people feeling and connected to the story. They love listening and playing music and couldn't stop dancing when picking out the music and sounds in Celia Cruz's world!



Maddie Napel, *Study Guide Designer & Contributor*

Maddie was once described by a student as a "professional imaginer," and she thinks that's a great description of her job. She loves reading and sharing stories, exploring the outdoors, and working to make art more accessible to people with disabilities, like her older brother. Maddie is the Director of Parachute Players, a theatre company dedicated to producing immersive, multi-sensory theatrical experiences.





Jordi Montes, *Tour Manager*

Jordi loves getting to work with all the schools, libraries, and community centers that she got to visit when she was a touring performer! Jordi also loves when Book-It does bilingual shows in Spanish because it reminds her of her family, who is from Mexico. When Jordi isn't working as the Tour Manager, she enjoys acting, playing the drums, walking her dog Thor (he's 11!), and spending time with her friends and family.



Gillian Jorgensen, *Education Director*

Gillian grew up on a farm, spending time playing among the dirt and growing crops, and imagining magical worlds with her sister. Now she does the exact same thing, except there's no dirt (usually) and the growing things are all props (usually). Gillian's favorite part of her job is reading piles and piles of books, imagining all the different ways to explore and act them out, then making that happen with real people!

If you were working for Book-It, what job would you like to have? Who would your collaborators be? What story do you imagine telling? How would you raise the money to make the set, props, costumes, and secure rights for the story? Who would be your audience?

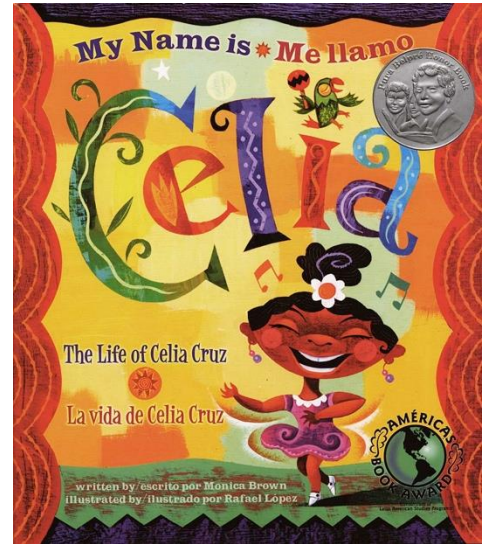
If you would like to know more about how to make stories into books, please ask us! We love correspondence! Book-It staff can be reached via email at education@book-it.org, through [@Book_It](https://twitter.com/Book_It) on Twitter, or by mailing a letter to Arts & Education Department, Book-It Repertory Theatre, 305 Harrison Street, Seattle, WA 98109.



Meet the Author and Illustrator

Book-It Repertory Theatre Arts & Education presents plays at schools, libraries, and community centers. Each of the plays is an adaptation of literature: the scripts started out as books! *My Name is/Me llamo Celia* was written by Monica Brown and illustrated by Rafael López. It was the first book either had worked on for children.

Since *My Name is/Me llamo Celia* was published in 2004, Monica Brown and Rafael López have written and illustrated many more children's books, separately and together.



Monica Brown, Author, is a children's book author and professor of literature at Northern Arizona University. In her writing and research, she is inspired by her Peruvian-American heritage and passion for multicultural stories. Through her stories, she is excited to introduce young people to “magical realism, social justice, and dreaming big!” She lives with her husband and two daughters in Flagstaff, Arizona.



Rafael López, Illustrator, is an illustrator, painter, and muralist born and raised in Mexico City. He is the founder of the Urban Art Trail Movement. You can read about this project in the children's book, *Maybe Something Beautiful*. You can also find his art on postage stamps, campaign posters, and in galleries. Rafael López lives and works out of his loft in San Diego, California and his home in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.

Celia Cruz

The Queen of Salsa

Celia Cruz was born in 1925 in Havana, Cuba. Her father worked as a railroad stoker, while her mother worked to raise Celia, her three siblings, and ten other young members of their extended family. Celia's family was Afro-Cuban, meaning she and her siblings were descended from African slaves brought to Cuba to work on sugar plantations.



*At a Musical Revue in Cuba, 1950s
Courtesy of Omer Pardillo Sid*

Although her father wanted her to become a teacher, Celia discovered her passion for singing and went to study voice, piano, and music theory at the National Conservatory of Music in Havana. In 1950, she became a lead vocalist for La Sonora Matancera, a now legendary Cuban orchestra.

In 1959, Fidel Castro came to power, making Cuba a socialist state. In 1960, La Sonora Matancera left on a tour to Mexico and decided not to return due. After a year touring in Mexico, Celia moved to New York City on November 20, 1961.

In New York, Celia joined a group of Latinx musicians combining their sounds into a new genre of music: Salsa. In the 1960s and 70s, this musical movement grew into a record label: Fania. Celia joined the label in 1974.



*Celia Cruz with her Grammy Award, 2003
Courtesy of Omer Pardillo Sid*

Celia continued recording, performing, and sharing stories until she died of brain cancer in 2003. Throughout her long career, Celia Cruz received five Grammy awards, three honorary doctorates, and countless other awards celebrating her trailblazing work as one of the only women in Salsa.



*Baby Celia Cruz
Courtesy of
Omer Pardillo Sid*



*Celia Cruz & husband,
Pedro Knight
Courtesy of
The Celia Cruz Foundation*



Memory and Song

“When I sing, memories of my childhood come back to me, spilling into my songs.”

In *My Name Is/Me llamo Celia*, we see and hear Celia’s memories: her family’s warm kitchen, the times she was not allowed to participate in singing competitions because of the color of her skin, the decision not to return to her beloved Cuba, and the milky sweetness of lots and lots of sugar in her coffee. Some memories are difficult while others are pleasant. These combined memories influence the lyrics of her songs.

In the play we hear Celia’s song “La Vida Es Un Carnaval.” The chorus goes like this:

*Ay, no hay que llorar,
que la vida es un carnaval
Es más bello vivir cantando
Oh, oh, oh, ay, no hay que llorar
Que la vida es un carnaval
Y las penas se van cantando*

*Ay, there's no need to cry,
because life is a carnival,
It's more beautiful to live singing.
Oh, ay, there's no need to cry,
For life is a carnival
And your pains go away by singing*

This does not mean that Celia Cruz never cried or thought that no one should cry. She found much solace in singing and sharing her music with others. She knew that music had the power to sooth and heal.

You have this power, too! Fill in the blanks to create an adaptation of the chorus of “La Vida Es Un Carnaval.” What are some of the experiences that you have right now that will stay with you? What does your house smell like? What do you love to do? What do you love to do, but are prevented from doing? Who are your friends? Think about these things, then make your song. If you have more ideas, make them into an original song!

Ay, there’s no need to _____,
cry, yell, hit, argue, or your own idea

Because life is a/an _____,
what is amazing around you?

It’s more beautiful to live _____.
what is something you like to do?

Oh, ay, there’s no need to _____,
repeat first line choice

For life is a/an _____
repeat second line choice

And your pains go away by _____.
repeat third line choice



Spotlight on Set Design

The Art of Catherine Cornell

In theater, a set designer is the person who makes choices about the physical things (backdrops, furniture, and other scenery) that will be on stage during a show. These set pieces create the world of the play. They help the audience understand both where the characters are and, through decisions about color and texture, how they might be feeling.

Catherine Cornell is the set designer for *My Name is Celia/ Me llamo Celia*, and she has a challenging job: designing and making sets that transport the audience all over the world—from Cuba to Mexico to Miami to New York—that can be moved around quickly and collapsed down into a van at the end of the show.

In the two images to the right, notice how Catherine uses the same six crates to represent buildings in Miami (top image) and the stage in a nightclub (bottom image). What other configurations are possible?



Design Challenge

Imagine you are the set designer for a play with three locations: a city street, a forest where something spooky happens, and the inside of a house. For your design, you may use three things: a large block (can be painted in any color/combination of colors), a reversible backdrop (each side can be painted differently), and one other found object of your choosing (for example, the microphone pictured above). How will you create all three worlds with these limited tools? Be sure to consider how the set will change between scenes: will the actors move the set? Or will crew members (professionals who work backstage) move the set? What choices will you make to make the forest feel spookier than the house and street?



Vocabulary

With Links to Listen

Adaptation (n.): a movie, book, play, etc., that is changed so that it can be presented in another form

Bilingual (adj.): using or expressed in two languages

Fania Records: a New York-based recording label (music publishing brand), founded by Johnny Pacheco and music promoter Jerry Masucci

Havana, Cuba: the capital city of Cuba, an island country in Latin America

Jazz (n.): a type of American music with lively rhythms and melodies that are often made up by musicians as they play

Johnny Pacheco: a Dominican musician who came up with the term “Salsa,” and founded Fania Records

La Sonora Matancera: an Afro-Cuban band founded in 1924

Magical Realism (n.): a style of fiction that combines magical and realistic elements, often associated with Latin American Literature

Mambo (n.): a dance originally from Cuba, also the music for this dance

Pedro Knight: a Cuban trumpeter, the husband and manager of Celia Cruz

Multicultural (adj.): relating to or including many different cultures

Railroad Stoker (n.): a worker who tends the fire that powers a steam engine by shoveling fuel, typically coal, into the boiler's firebox

Rumba (n.): another type of dance originally from Cuba, which features distinctive hip movement, also the music for this type of dance

Salsa (n.): popular music of Latin American origin with characteristics of rhythm and blues, jazz, and rock

Social Justice (n.): the concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society, measured by equal access to money, opportunity, and privileges

Tito Puente: a Nuyorican (New York-born Puerto Rican) musician, sometimes called “The King of Latin Music”

Willie Colon: a Nuyorican musician and social activist, born 1950





Resources

To Read, Watch, Listen, and Share

Read: More stories by Monica Brown

<http://www.monicabrown.net/books/index.php>

Read: More stories illustrated by Rafael López

<https://rafaellopez.com/books/>

Read and Watch: *Maybe Something Beautiful, How Art Transformed a Neighborhood*

About the Urban Art Trail Movement founded by Rafael López

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nL5TzKaDXzA>

Watch: Celia Cruz and the Fania All Stars perform *Quimbara* in Zaire, Africa 1974

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXN- aslaYs&feature=youtu.be>

Read: Biography of Celia Cruz

<https://rafaellopez.com/2017/09/17/hispanic-heritage-celia-cruz/>

Read: Article about the importance of multicultural children's literature

<http://www.monicabrown.net/files/mbrownlanguagearts.pdf>

Listen: NPR interview with Monica Brown

<http://www.monicabrown.net/images/interviewapril2005.mp3>

Explore: New Curriculum on Celia by educator Linda Kreft

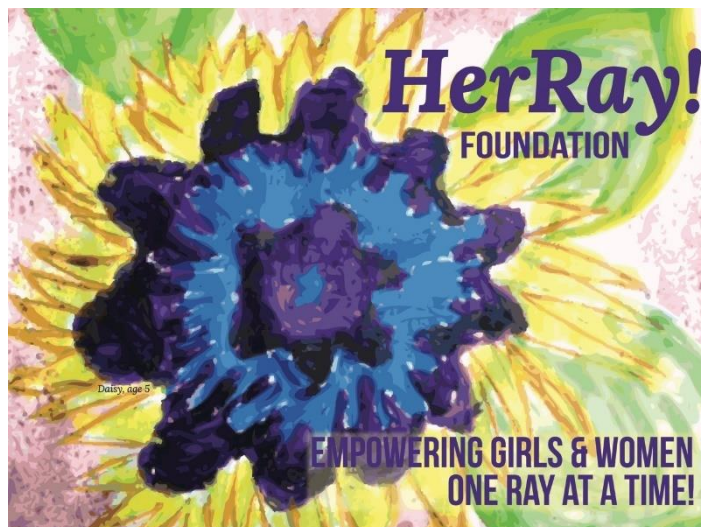
<http://www.lindakreft.com/Americas/pdf/celia.pdf>

Explore: Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History

<https://amhistory.si.edu/celiacruz/main.asp?lang=AWN373504566BODXv>



Book-It Repertory Theatre's Touring Productions for the 2019-2020 season were generously sponsored by **HerRay! Foundation** and **Dusty Strings**.



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