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Dramatic Publishing

¡BOCÓN!



Comedy/Drama
by
Lisa Loomer



The Dramatic Publishing Company

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¡BOCÓN!

Cast: flexible, usually 3m., 2w. playing multiple roles. ¡Bocón!, a fable filled with humor and mysticism and song, tells the story of 12-year-old Miguel who flees a repressive military regime in Central America for Los Angeles. A natural storyteller and irrepressible “big mouth” or bocón, Miguel loses his voice when his parents are taken and begins a metaphorical journey north to the City of Angels. Along the way he meets up with an unusual traveling companion, La Llorona, the legendary “Weeping Woman” of Central American and Mexican mythology. Through their magical friendship, Miguel finds his voice and the courage to cross the border to a new life. Miguel’s story is relevant to immigrant children from all parts of the world...and to any child who is learning the many meanings of finding one’s own “voice.” A live musician usually accompanies the piece. One flexible set. Running time about 55 minutes.

*Front cover photo: Mark Taper Forum’s Theatre for Young People,
P.L.A.Y. production.
Photo: Craig Schwartz
Cover design: David G. Sergel*

10 ISBN: 087129-870-8
13 ISBN: 978-087129-870-6



www.dramaticpublishing.com

Code: B36



Printed on Recycled Paper

¡BOCÓN!

A Full-length Play

by

LISA LOOMER



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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(¡BOCÓN!)

ISBN 0-87129-870-8

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The Improvisational Theatre Project of the Mark Taper Forum, Los Angeles, first presented ¡BOCÓN! in 1989. The production was directed by Peter C. Brosius and included the following cast:

(In alphabetical order)
ALMA MARTINEZ
KAREN MARUYAMA
ARMANDO MOLINA
IRMA "CUI CUI" RANGEL
LUCY RODRIGUEZ
JAMES TYRONE-WALLACE II
Percussionist — JOHN FITZGERALD

Movement and Choreography Miguel Delgado
Sound Design Ara Tokatlian
Original Music Ara Tokatlian and John Fitzgerald
Set Design Victoria Petrovich
Costume Design Lydia Tanji
Mask Design Alfredo Calderón
Assistant Director John Wills Martin
Production Manager Diane Divita
Technical Director Richard Moore
Stage Manager Carol Boland
Assistant Stage Manager Jaime Vasquez
Properties Supervisor Ron Shulem
Assistant to Costume Designer Judy Bloch
Production Assistants . . . Julie Chavez and Bernardo Rosa Jr.
Tour Coordinator Dana Axelrod
Manager Elizabeth Harvey

¡BOCÓN!

A Full-length Play
For 6 actors (with doubling)

CHARACTERS

MIGUEL “Bocón” (Big Mouth), a storyteller of 12
BORDER GUARD (offstage voice) American
THE JUDGE (voice). American
ANA Miguel’s mother
LUIS Miguel’s father
CECILIA Miguel’s aunt, 40s
ROSITA her daughter
KIKI an old Indian
LA LLORONA “The Weeping Woman”
TWO VIEJITAS crazy old crones
THE VOICE KEEPER an elegant, smooth, smiling fascist
THE VOICE PICKER a slightly touched old woman
CALAVERA a skeleton. A nightmare in boots
DUENDE a trickster, short and green, and a coyote
TWO GUARD DOGS fierce, but funny

TIME: Anytime there is war, and refugees.

PLACE: A judge’s chambers across the U.S. border;
a village in Central America; and a forest in between.

Running time: Approximately 55 minutes.

One flexible set.

BOCON!

AT RISE: The play opens with a rhythmic spoken piece—an invitation and a challenge to the audience. The actors are in simple white clothes, suggesting a chorus of campesinos. They each have two (straw) sticks which are beaten against each other, against the floor, in the air, or against the sticks of another actor, creating rhythm and movement.

CHORUS. Imagine a land—

ACTOR 1. ¡Fíjate, imagine!

CHORUS. Jaguars, papagallos—

ACTOR 2. Yellow corn in the fields—

CHORUS. Imagine a land—¡fíjate imagine!

ACTOR 3. ¡Oye marimba!

ACTOR 4. ¿Quieres sandías?

ACTOR 5. ¡Mira—Quetzal en las ceibas allí!

CHORUS. Imagine a place—WAR in the mountains!

ACTOR 1. There's war in the mountains!

ACTOR 2. Fire in the sky!

CHORUS. Imagine this place—not far from here ...

ACTOR 3 (*whispered*). Fíjate, imagine—

(Faster now, imploring.)

ACTOR 1. Cross the borders!

ACTOR 4. Take my story—

CHORUS. Cross the borders—

ACTOR 5. Take my hand!

CHORUS (*fading*). Take my story, take my story ... Fíjate, imagine ...

SCENE ONE

SCENE: Night. The stage is bare and dark. Sound of HELICOPTERS. MIGUEL enters and begins to run from a Border Guard we do not see. The CHORUS creates a border with their sticks, stopping him. As soon as he speaks, the CHORUS vanishes.

BORDER GUARD'S VOICE (*out of breath*). Stop! That's it, kid. Now you hold it right there.

(MIGUEL stops. It is as though a bird were being captured. One of MIGUEL's arms is lifted up, then the other, like wings. Then both are brought down and back behind him, and the chase is over.

The JUDGE appears behind a scrim, or he may be a shadow cast over MIGUEL, or just a voice over a microphone.)

JUDGE. What's your name, son?

(MIGUEL is too frightened and confused to speak.)

JUDGE. Where do you come from? Guatemala? Mexico? El Salvador? (*Waits.*) Who brought you here? Your parents? Where are your parents, son? (*Louder, slowly.*) ¿Sus padres? ¿Dónde estan sus padres? (*Clears throat.*) Look. I am a judge, son. How am I supposed to know where to send you back to, if I don't know where you're from? (*Faster, more insistently.*) What are you afraid of? Where are your parents? WHERE ARE YOU FROM? (*The last line echoes. The JUDGE bangs his gavel—and we hear THE BOOT sound that MIGUEL hears in his mind.*)

SCENE TWO

SCENE: MIGUEL starts to tell the JUDGE his story, awkwardly at first. As he gets more comfortable, it is directed more and more to the audience.

MIGUEL. Yo vengo de...es un pueblito... I come from a small village, San Juan de La Paz, in the middle of my country...by the river they call La Ballena—because the river swells up sometimes like a fat green whale! And we—all the people there work for Don Madera, picking his coffee for him in the fields and— (*Remembers, smiles.*) My father says he can't pick his own coffee 'cause his belly is so big, he— (*Sticks belly way out.*) can't find the basket! (*Laughs at his joke—then explains it.*) To put the coffee beans in, pos... (*Embarrassed.*) Bueno, after you're done working, you could go to the Plaza—where there's always people selling... (*From off-*

stage, we hear the VENDORS selling their wares, softly beckoning MIGUEL's memory.)

VENDOR 1 (ROSITA) (*singsong*). ¡Pupusas!

VENDOR 2. ¡Bananos!

VENDOR 3. ¡Flores!

(They enter and spread out their wares—which are glued to blankets and unfurled, as memory is unfurled, in a swirl of color and movement.)

VENDOR 4 (CECILIA). ¡Tamales!

ROSITA. ¡Aguacates!

VENDOR 3. ¡Piñas!

ROSITA. ¡Manzanas!

VENDOR 2. ¡Aguas frescas!

(MIGUEL takes a bunch of firecrackers from his pocket—a self-styled vendor.)

MIGUEL (*to the plaza*). Firecrackers! ¡Cohetes! ¡Para La Fiesta de San Juan! The saints love firecrackers—that's how they know there's a fiesta. (*To the sky.*) Saints—come down from the sky, and bring a fat juicy pig for Rosita! ¡Qué vengan a la fiesta—todos los Santos gordos—all the fat saints!

ROSITA. Miguel!

MIGUEL. Come down before Rosita eats all the food in the village!

CECILIA. Ay, he's got a big mouth—

ROSITA (*eating a pupusa*). ¡Bocón!

MIGUEL. Come sing!

CECILIA. Not so loud, Bocón, or the soldiers will hear you!

(But this makes him more rambunctious—and he sings a rhythmic child's song to which he's changed the words to mock the soldiers.)

MIGUEL *(sings defiantly)*.

¡CHANCA BARRANCA, HOJITOS DE LAUREL,
SOLDIERS OF MY VILLAGE—SOLDADOS DE PAPEL!

CECILIA. ¡Cállate! Quiet!

MIGUEL *(to audience; still giddy)*. The soldiers didn't like us to shout or sing ...

(KIKI EL LOCO enters and prepares for his ritual dance.)

MIGUEL *(serious now)*. Or dance.

(The tone of the scene changes, as KIKI is as much a part of the spirit world as this one.)

MIGUEL. But there was an old Indian, Kiki El Loco, who used to dance all the time at fiestas—right in the plaza! They say he was deaf—but he could hear music right through the ground—like a radio!

(KIKI begins to dance. It's part folk dance, part wizardry, part protest. The others watch in awe—and some fear.)

CECILIA. Mira ese Kiki El Loco—how many times have they told him, “Don’t dance!”

MIGUEL. He’s not afraid of nothing! ¡Mira—the Dance of the Quetzal! The Bird of Freedom! (*We hear the sound of THE BOOT.*) ¡Los Soldados! The soldiers!

(The VENDORS run off, frightened.)

ANA (*calls from offstage*). Miguel!

MIGUEL (*calls, without moving*). ¡Sí, ahorita vengo, Mamá! Coming! (*We hear THE BOOT, closer. Fierce whisper from MIGUEL.*) Kiki! ¡Allí vienen los soldados, Kiki! The soldiers!

(KIKI stomps into the ground, defying the soldiers. As he dances off, he gives MIGUEL a magnificent red and green feather. THE BOOT fades.)

MIGUEL (*to audience; with wonder*). The feather of the Quetzal! The Bird of Freedom... Kiki—he danced the soldiers away. He’s not afraid of nothing! (*Sings, fearless.*)

CHANCA BARRANCA HOJTOS DE LAUREL,
SOLDADOS DE MI TIERRA, SOLDADOS GO TO—

ANA (*offstage*). Miguel! Come in now or La Llorona’s gonna get you!

MIGUEL (*terrified*). La Llorona...!

SCENE THREE

SCENE: ANA runs on and pulls MIGUEL to another part of the stage, and we are in their house. She lays their petates (mats) and blankets on the floor, then begins to wash MIGUEL in a basin, as he continues to the audience.

MIGUEL. La Llorona! “The Weeping Woman.” Everybody in the village says she’s a witch. They say—

ANA. She killed her own children! (ANA is killing MIGUEL’s ears, scrubbing.)

MIGUEL. ¿Verdad, Mamá?

ANA. They say she drowned them in the river! (She nearly drowns MIGUEL.)

MIGUEL. ¡Ay, Mamá, por favor!

ANA. And then—was she sorry! She was so sad, she’s been going all over the world for hundreds of years crying— (Bloodcurdling.) “¡Ay mis hiiiiijos!”

MIGUEL (wails). “My children! My children!”

(ANA gets him under the blankets. The basin is turned over and covered with a cloth, becoming an altar.)

ANA (scary). And if you’re outside after dark, she’ll think you’re one of her children—and she’ll grab you and take you down to the river too! (Her tone changes completely and she’s just a regular loving mom. Sweetly:) Good night, Miguel. (ANA lies down beside him and sighs, content. Then we hear, in the wind ...)

LA LLORONA’S VOICE (bloodcurdling). ¡Ay mis hiiiiijos!

(The altar shakes. MIGUEL jumps about three feet in the air, startled.)

MIGUEL. Mamá! I saw her! La Llorona—right outside, allí! She was dressed all in black and she was ten feet tall—and she was floating on the air, Mamá! She had a face like death, como la Calavera— *(Makes a deathly face.)* Así! And yellow teeth like a dog—and snakes for hair—and she put a magnet in me— *(Hand to his heart.)* Here! And she was pulling me... Right. Down. To the river. And she was crying, “¡Ay mis hiiiiijos!”

ANA *(calmly)*. Cálmate, Miguel. *(She pulls him down beside her on the mat. Shakes her head and sighs, “What a nut.” She crosses herself. They go to sleep. Then ...)*

LA LLORONA’S VOICE. ¡Ay, mis hiiiiijos!

(The house, the mountains—the whole set shakes. ANA and MIGUEL sit straight up, crossing themselves madly.)

ANA *(trying to convince herself)*. It was just the wind, m’hijo, nada más. Duérmete con los ángeles—sleep with the angels, sí? *(She begins a lullaby.)* A la ru-ru niño, a la ru-ru ya ... duérmese mi niño ...

(LUIS enters.)

LUIS *(gravely)*. Ana— *(ANA goes to him.)* Kiki El Loco has disappeared.

(MIGUEL pops up.)

MIGUEL *(straight out)*. Kiki? He disappeared? *(Cries.)* No!

SCENE FOUR

SCENE: *A ROOSTER CROWS. It is dawn. MIGUEL comes D to the audience.*

MIGUEL. A lot of people were disappearing in my village.

(LUIS sharpens his machete. ANA rolls up the blankets and prepares tortillas, patting rhythmically.)

MIGUEL. But how do people disappear, Papá? Does the earth just open up and suck them in? Or—or maybe it's the duendes, the little green people that trick them into their caves—or one of those ships that come down from the sky!—or maybe it's the—

LUIS *(puts a gentle hand over MIGUEL's mouth)*. Soldiers.

MIGUEL *(softly)*. I know ...

LUIS. Vámanos.

(ANA sprinkles holy water in the four corners of the house and exits. MIGUEL gets his machete and his guitar. He starts to go in the wrong direction. LUIS turns him around.)

LUIS. Norte, Miguel. North. *(They walk, circling the stage, to the fields.)*

MIGUEL. But why are the soldiers so angry with us, Papá? If the soldiers are supposed to protect us, why is everybody afraid of them?

LUIS. It's a long story.

MIGUEL (*to audience*). A lot of my father's stories were long, but it was a long walk to the fields...

LUIS. When the earth was about your age, there was only one man. Adam.

MIGUEL (*cuts in*). I know—the guy who ate the apple. And then he said, “This apple is so good I'm going to—”

LUIS (*hand over MIGUEL's mouth*). “Sell it.”

(A line of CAMPESINOS appear U, working the fields in a slow rhythmic movement across the stage. LUIS's story is punctuated by the sound of their machetes. D, LUIS and MIGUEL work too.)

LUIS. Well, God didn't like Adam selling his apples, because they weren't Adam's apples.

MIGUEL (*laughs*). “Adam's apples—”

LUIS (*gives him a look*). They were the earth's apples. And God was so angry he took his machete and chopped Adam in three— (*He chops with his machete, illustrating.*)

MIGUEL. Cómo una manzana—

LUIS. Like an apple, sí. And God said, “Adam—I'm going to take your head, Adam, and out of your head I'm going to make the Rich Man. Just a big head—and a pair of hands for grabbing. Then I'm going to take your arms and your back, Adam, and make the Poor Man. And the Poor Man will work the fields to put food in the Rich Man's mouth. (*Pause.*) A ver, qué falta? What's left...

MIGUEL. The foot! Sí! And—and God said, “Adam, I'm going to take your foot, and out of your foot I'll make...”

LUIS. “The soldier. And the soldier will kick the Poor Man to do the Rich Man’s work forever!” (*Laughs.*) Y ya, m’hijo, that’s the world. (*Beat.*) Pos, Adam forgot that he used to be one man, and all that’s changed in thousands of years—is now the soldier’s got a BOOT! (*Laughing.*) And a dirty one, too! ¡Y fea y cochina también!

MIGUEL (*frightened*). Papá, not so loud, Papá—the soldiers will hear you, they’ll think you’re laughing at them!

LUIS (*laughing*). But I am— I am laughing at them! Big ugly boot y apestosa, smelly, también! (*Beat.*) But one day, m’hijo, the Poor Man’s going to put down his machete... (*Raises his arms.*) and use his arms to tell The Boot, “NO MORE!” ¿Sí?

MIGUEL. Sí, Papá.

LUIS. No más. Eso. Soon. A trabajar ...

MIGUEL (*takes the feather from his pocket; tentatively*).
Mira, Papá—

LUIS. The feather of the Quetzal—the Bird of Freedom!
Vete—run, Miguel, show your mamá—tell her it’s good luck!

MIGUEL (*starts to run*). Sí, Papá!

LUIS (*exits, singing, chopping with his machete*).

BRAZOS PARA TRABAJAR...
CORAZÓN PARA AMAR...
SEMILLAS PARA PLANTAR...
ESTA VOZ PARA GRITAR...