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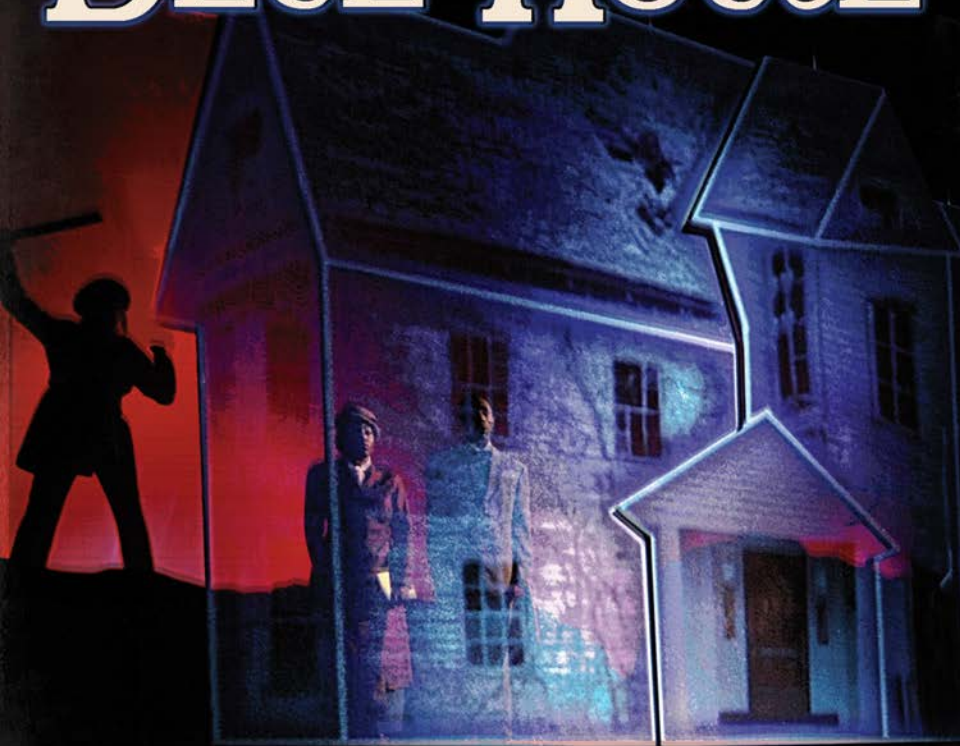
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Dramatic Publishing

JOSÉ CRUZ GONZÁLEZ

THE BLUE HOUSE



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THE BLUE HOUSE

Drama. By José Cruz González. *Cast: 2m., 4w.* *The Blue House* is the story of 13-year-old Maricela, who lives in a vibrant Chicago neighborhood with a rich and sad history. Haunting dreams of strangers from another time lead Maricela to an abandoned lot where the mysterious Blue House once stood and where Maricela encounters the spirit of a mysterious African-American woman. Told in English and Spanish, this thrilling story, set during the 1919 Race Riot and present day, celebrates the power of courage, love and forgiveness. Commissioned by Adventure Stage Chicago and the Chicago Children's Humanities Festival. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 70 minutes. Code: BL3.*

Cover image: Adventure Stage Chicago, featuring (l-r) Sarah Rose Graber, Mildred Langford and Eddie Jordan III.

Photo: Johnny Knight. Cover design: Jeanette Alig-Sergel.

ISBN: 978-1-58342-970-9



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www.dramaticpublishing.com



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The Blue House

By

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(THE BLUE HOUSE)

ISBN: 978-1-58342-970-9

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For Ximena Soto and her family.

The Blue House was commissioned by The Chicago Humanities Festival and commissioned and premiered by Adventure Stage Chicago at Vittum Theater on April 5.

Director Tom Arvetis
Scenic Design..... Jessica Kuehnau
Lighting Design Brandon Wardell
Costume Design Laura Kollar
Sound Design and Original Music..... Mikhail Fiksel
Props Design Katie Powers
Video Design..... Mike Tutaj
Dramaturg Lenora Inez Brown
Stage Manager Jackelyn Normand
Floor Manager..... Adam Earle

Cast:

Maricela Jasmin Cardenas
Isom..... Donte Fitzgerald
Ms. Betnorakate Sarah Rose Graber
Henry..... Eddie Jordan III
Illyria..... Mildred Langford
Esperanza Isabel Quintero

Adventure Stage Chicago:

Producing Artistic Director Tom Arvetis
Managing Director Scott Letscher
Director of Education..... Merissa Shunk
Audience Development Coordinator Jana Liles
Production Manager..... Brandon Campbell
Marketing and Public Relations Manager.. Jennifer Mathews
Technical Director Erin Miller
Administrative Assistant Brittney Kelly
Front of House Lucinda Alipio, Stephenie Creegan,
Phoebe Duncan, Tai Palmgren

The Blue House

CHARACTERS

Six actors can perform the play, but many more are encouraged. The roles may be split giving opportunity to everyone involved.

MARICELA DEL CAMPO: a 13-year-old Latina girl. Spunky, imaginative and small framed. Contemporary clothing.

ESPERANZA DEL CAMPO: early 30s, Latina. Mother to Maricela. There is a quiet sadness about her.

ISOM (*EE-SOM*): 93-year-old African-American man. He is ageless and can see the dead.

MS. BETNORAKATE (*BET-NORA-KATE*): 40s woman. A real estate lawyer. Pushy but dedicated to her client.

ILLYRIA BROWN REDWOOD: 20s elegantly dressed African-American woman. Classy and educated.

HENRY ELIJAH REDWOOD: 20s African-American jazz musician. Father of Isom. A memory.

OTHER CHARACTERS:

ENSEMBLE #1-5

NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS

CHOLO NEIGHBOR

FEARFUL IMMIGRANT WIFE

OLD VET

BLUE GHOSTS

LA LLORNE DEL NORTE

SHADOWS

FIGURES IN SILHOUETTE #1-5

SHADOW FIGURES

IMMIGRANT IN BLUE

The Blue House

(It is night in an empty lot in a Chicago working-class immigrant neighborhood. Onstage, a bony remnant of a tree stands alone, reaching up towards heaven. It is all that remains from the lot's historic past.

There is a small wooden cross with flowers onstage. The descanso [a memorial] is used to mark a place where someone has died.

Music. Fireflies appear in the darkness. They fade away, replaced by our ENSEMBLE. The ENSEMBLE members are spirits from the city's past.)

Prologue

ENSEMBLE #1. We've come to tell you a tale.

ENSEMBLE #2. A ghostly tale spun out of the night.

ENSEMBLE #3. When things creep and crawl.

ENSEMBLE #4. And give you such a fright.

ENSEMBLE #5. Pay close attention.

ENSEMBLE #1. Be very aware.

ENSEMBLE #2. You may feel some apprehension—

ENSEMBLE #3. But the answers are there.

ENSEMBLE #4. So solve the great mystery—

ENSEMBLE #5. This thriller you see.

ENSEMBLE #1. Isn't just about history—

ENSEMBLE #2. Or a house and a key.

ENSEMBLE #3. Our tale begins here in Pilsen—

ENSEMBLE #4. Or it could be the Back of the Yards—

ENSEMBLE #5. Or even Little Village.

ENSEMBLE #1. Neighborhoods the city disregards.

ENSEMBLE #2. The people who live here are humble.

ENSEMBLE #3. They're the working poor.

ENSEMBLE #4. They're mostly immigrants.

ENSEMBLE #5. Yet they endure.

ENSEMBLE #1. Tiny fireflies will dance upon the night.

ENSEMBLE #2. Transforming a lonely girl's life into something wonderfully bright.

(MARICELA DEL CAMPO, a 13-year-old Latina girl, appears. She wears a school backpack. She does not see the ENSEMBLE.)

MARICELA *(searching)*. ¿'Amá?

ENSEMBLE #2. Her name is *Maricela del Campo*.

ENSEMBLE #3. It's her thirteenth year.

MARICELA. ¿'Amá?

ENSEMBLE #4. She lives with her mom in a studio apartment.

ENSEMBLE #5. Sadness looms for they've lost something dear.

MARICELA. Where are you?

ENSEMBLE #1. Be warned you might be moved.

ENSEMBLE #2. Be warned you might shed tears.

MARICELA. Where have you gone?

ENSEMBLE #3. One thing is perfectly clear.

ENSEMBLE #5. She's stepped onto a new frontier.

MARICELA *(some fireflies appear)*. Hey, where did you come from? You shine like glittering water drops! *(They fade away.)* Oh, no, don't leave! Wait! Come back!

ENSEMBLE #1-5. "*El Descanso*. The Resting Place."

Scene 1

(ESPERANZA DEL CAMPO, an early 30s Latina mother, kneels before the descanso. She wears a shawl over her head and holds a small bouquet of fresh flowers.)

MARICELA. 'Amá, there you are!

(MARICELA joins her mother.)

ESPERANZA & MARICELA. *Padre nuestro que estás en los cielos, santificado sea tu nombre, venga a nosotros tu reino—*

MARICELA. 'Amá, you won't believe what I saw! Fireflies! 'Amá, do you think fireflies can be angels?

(ESPERANZA slams the flowers on to the ground.)

ESPERANZA. *¿Dónde estás, Marcelo?*

MARICELA. 'Apá is in good hands. One day we'll be together again.

(ESPERANZA cries.)

MARICELA *(cont'd)*. *No llores, 'Amá. I'll never leave you.*

ESPERANZA *(assuring herself)*. *Ya, ya.*

MARICELA. Do you remember when we first arrived to this country? Everything was upside down, learning a new language and customs. You taught me that we have to look at our problems as gifts from the universe and learn to solve them.

ESPERANZA *(to herself)*. *Ándale. (She rises.)*

MARICELA. Is that a smile I see? Good! *Vámonos a la casa.*

(They enter their apartment.)

ENSEMBLE #3. Their home is a bare room.

ENSEMBLE #4. But it isn't all gloom.

ENSEMBLE #5. A journal rests in a cardboard box.

ENSEMBLE #3. Colorfully painted, what a sweet touch.

ENSEMBLE #3-5. “*El apartamento*. The apartment.”

(The ENSEMBLE helps to reveal a bare interior of an apartment with light bulb. The “el” [Chicago’s Rapid Transit] is heard off in the distance. ESPERANZA clicks on the light bulb, finding MARICELA’s journal in the box.)

ESPERANZA. “*Anotación uno*. I dream in Spanish but I don’t know why. I love my journal ’cause I can write whatever I feel. I miss my *’Apá* so much ...”

(ESPERANZA places the journal away in a cardboard box that also contains an unwrapped gift. MARICELA enters.)

MARICELA. *’Amá*, my birthday is coming up in a few days. I don’t expect a surprise birthday party for my friends and me, but if there were one, I’d be OK with it. I’m just saying.

ESPERANZA (*sadly*). *Ay, Mari*.

(ESPERANZA lies down.)

MARICELA. OK, I’ll just lie here and rest my eyes a bit ’cause the night is still young and crazy. *(She lies down by her mother. Beat. She pops up.)* Oh, boy, I’m completely rested! ¿*’Amá*? Oh, what’s the use?

(MARICELA yawns. She lies back down and soon falls asleep. Music. ILLYRIA BROWN REDWOOD appears. She is an elegantly dressed African-American woman from the early 20th century. She wears her hair up. She holds a journal in her arms. MARICELA steps into her dream.)

ILLYRIA. *Mi abuelita me dio el nombre de Illyria*.

MARICELA. Who are you?

ILLYRIA. My grandmother named me Illyria because it came from her favorite play, *Twelfth Night*.

MARICELA. *Twelfth Night* ...

ILLYRIA. My grandmother was a house slave.

MARICELA. Where do you come from?

ILLYRIA. She taught herself to read and write.

MARICELA. I taught myself, too.

ILLYRIA. Then she taught her daughter who taught me.

MARICELA. You're so beautiful.

ILLYRIA. When my grandmother died, she left me her journal.

MARICELA. I have a journal.

ILLYRIA. It has our family's entire history.

(ILLYRIA exits as the wail of a trumpet is heard. HENRY ELIJAH REDWOOD, an African-American man in his mid-20s, appears. He is handsomely dressed in a suit and hat.)

HENRY. *Mi querida* Illyria, *llegué a* Chicago!

MARICELA. Who are you?

HENRY. I made it to Chicago, Illyria! Thousands of colored folk are leaving the South and comin' north to find their promise land by way of the Illinois Central, our mechanical Moses!

MARICELA. Mechanical Moses!

HENRY. It's a great migration of hope. Jazz music is cookin' here with the likes of Joe "King" Oliver, Kid Ory and Jelly Roll Morton! Clubs are hoppin' with talent beyond anyone's wildest imagination. I have died and gone to heaven!

MARICELA. Is this heaven?

HENRY. I will send for you as soon as I am settled. I've got something important to ask you.

(HENRY plays his trumpet exiting. MARICELA writes in her journal.)

MARICELA. I dreamed of a woman named Illyria Brown and a young, handsome man whose face and hands are the color of chocolate. He plays the trumpet, making a beautiful kind of music called “jazz.”

(A crescent shaped moon rises into the sky.)

ENSEMBLE #5. An old man tunnels through the earth by night.

ENSEMBLE #4. He rises before the moonlight.

ENSEMBLE #3. Collecting scraps from a forgotten past.

ENSEMBLE #5. Relishing all that he’s amassed.

(A shovel and then a sack pop out of a hole. ISOM [EE-SOM] emerges. He is a tall African-American man who is 93 years old, but you couldn’t tell by looking at him. He wears goggles and a miner’s hat with a lamp. He places the lamp near the tree. It casts a creepy shadow. The neighborhood dogs join in. The NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS are heard.)

CHOLO NEIGHBOR. *Órale*, the ghost is back, lock the door!

FEARFUL IMMIGRANT WIFE. *¡Ay, cierra la ventana, es Chupacabra!*

OLD VET. It’s Bloody Mary crawling through the keyhole!

ALL. AAGGHHH!

(Windows are heard closing, doors are heard slamming, locks are heard locking. The lights in the apartments go out. ISOM smiles. He looks into his sack, removing an old piece of junk. He studies it.)

ISOM. Hmm. *(He tosses it into the sack and grabs another.)*

Ah huh. *(He also tosses that into the sack, grabbing something else. Proudly.)* Jiminy Cricket!

(He howls loudly. The neighborhood dogs join in. MARICELA suddenly awakens.)

MARICELA. *'Amá*, did you hear that?

ISOM (*holds up a car horn*). I gots the magic touch! Bloodhound is what I am! Metal detector too! Floatin' like a butterfly, stingin' like a bee! Ain't nobody gonna stop me!

MARICELA (*sees him from her apartment window*). Oh, no, it's "*el loco*"!

ISOM (*sees her*). Oh, shoot!

(ISOM runs off leaving his sack. MARICELA dives into bed. The hole in the lot glows blue light as the earth rumbles.)

Scene 2

(A rooster crows, and early morning appears. Music. MARICELA and ESPERANZA prepare for the day.)

ENSEMBLE #3. A Salvadoran *cumbia* greets the Chicago morning loudly.

ENSEMBLE #4. *Maricela* and her mother walk through the neighborhood on their way to the store proudly.

ENSEMBLE #5. The sights and sounds of the community burst forth with spunk.

ENSEMBLE #3. Children play, vendors sell, parents shop and the elders watch as the world passes in all its glorious funk.

ENSEMBLE #3-5. "*El barrio*. The neighborhood."

(ESPERANZA holds an umbrella to protect her from the sun as they walk through the neighborhood.)

ESPERANZA. *Buenos días, Doña Maria, ¿cómo está usted?*

MARICELA. *¡Hola, Doña!*

ESPERANZA. *Sí, todo está bien*. I am feeling much better. *Muchas gracias*.

MARICELA. *¡Buenos días, señor Rodríguez!*

ESPERANZA. *Señor Rodríguez, le agradezco por las flores*.

MARICELA. The flowers you gave us rock!

ESPERANZA. *Fui al descanso ayer. Sí, hace casi un año.*

MARICELA. My birthday is coming up! I'll never be 13 again! Woo-hoo!

ESPERANZA. *Ándale, que le vaya bien.*

MARICELA. Hey, Ernie! What's up, fool?

ESPERANZA. *Ernesto, dile a tu mamá que la comida fue muy buena.*

MARICELA. Yeah, the pizza and breadsticks were awesome! *(She sees the hole in the lot.) 'Amá, I'll catch up with you at the botánica. I won't get into any trouble.*

(ESPERANZA exits.)

MARICELA *(cont'd, looks in the sack.)* What's this? *(She holds up a car horn.)* Junk. *(She sticks her head down the hole.)* Hello! *(Her echo is heard, "Hello, hello, hello!")* Wow! *(Her echo is heard, "Wow, wow, wow!")* Hey, what's this? It's an old house key? *(She holds up the old key.)* Why was *el loco* sneaking around the lot last night? Was he looking for this? Oh, my gosh, what if he's a mass murderer and the key is to a cellar where he stores all his victims?

(Just then MS. BETNORAKATE [BET-NORA-KATE] enters. She is a real estate lawyer. She's speaking on her cellphone. She carries a sign under her arm. MARICELA jumps into the hole.)

MS. BETNORAKATE. I don't care how you do it, just do it! I want that paper work completed as soon as possible. Nothing's stopping me from selling this lot. *(She clicks off her phone, placing a sign that reads, "Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted.")* She looks at the hole and *descanso.*) I knew it! That crazy old mole is up to no good! *(She tears out the descanso, throwing it into the hole.)*

MARICELA. Aagghhh!

MS. BETNORAKATE. Who said that!?!)

(Beat. MS. BETNORAKATE exits. MARICELA climbs out, placing the descanso back.)

MARICELA. Hey, you! This *descanso* is sacred! That's right! I'm talking to you! You better not show your face here! Oh, shoot!

(MARICELA jumps back into the hole. MS. BENORAKATE returns.)

MS. BETNORAKATE. Show your face! Who are you!?! *(To herself.)* This lot's not haunted.

MARICELA. BOO!

MS. BENTORAKATE. AAGGHHH!!!

(MS. BENORAKATE runs off. MARICELA climbs out of the hole and writes in her journal.)

MARICELA. Why is that mean lady selling the lot? Why does she hate *el loco*? *(She holds up the key.)* And what does this old key unlock?

Scene 3

(A full moon appears in the sky. MARICELA and ESPERANZA are asleep.)

ENSEMBLE #4. She closes her eyes and has visions.

ENSEMBLE #1. Questions, there are so many questions.

ENSEMBLE #4. But what's the girl to do?

ENSEMBLE #1. Maybe what she sees are clues?

ENSEMBLE #1 & 4. "*La Dama y su hombre*. The lady and her man."

(A gramophone plays music. ILLYRIA appears dancing joyfully. MARICELA steps into her dream.)

MARICELA. Illyria!

(MARICELA imitates her. HENRY enters, rolling a tabletop that is covered with a piece of fabric.)

MARICELA *(cont'd)*. Henry!

HENRY. Miss Brown, I've come to ask for your hand in marriage.

MARICELA *(sweetly)*. Aaah!

ILLYRIA. I see you know nothing about courting an educated woman, Mr. Redwood.

MARICELA. Oh, snap!

HENRY. No, ma'am, but I have been trying very hard for the past three years.

MARICELA. That's like forever!

ILLYRIA. Well, I haven't made up my mind yet.

HENRY. I brought you something so you will.

ILLYRIA. What is it?

MARICELA. Yeah, show us!

HENRY. You can't see it unless you agree that you'll give me an answer today.

MARICELA. Tell him, "Yes!"

ILLYRIA. Very well, I agree.

(HENRY reveals a model house.)

ILLYRIA *(cont'd)*. It's so beautiful!

HENRY. This here is just a model, but I'm gonna build you a real one.

ILLYRIA. Where?

HENRY. On an empty lot I bought near the Loop. I've saved enough money from playin' jazz. This is gonna be our home.

ILLYRIA. Ours?

HENRY. That's right. It's time we got married and started a family.

MARICELA. *¡Ay, que romantico!*

ILLYRIA. You can't buy my love, Mr. Redwood.

MARICELA. Oh-oh!

HENRY. Stop playin' hard to get, Illy. Three years is a long time to try a good man's patience and his hard work. I love you and you love me. So what do you say?

MARICELA. Tell him, "Yes!"

ILLYRIA. Before I give you my answer, you have to promise me one thing, Mr. Redwood.

HENRY. What's that?

MARICELA. Yeah?

ILLYRIA. When you build our house, I want this key to fit into sturdy doors.

(ILLYRIA holds out a key. It is like the key MARICELA possesses.)

MARICELA. Hey, that looks like—

HENRY. Why this key?

ILLYRIA. My grandfather made it from a slave shackle that brought our family to America.

MARICELA. Wow.

ILLYRIA. He created it to remind us of the sacrifice and blood we endured coming here.

MARICELA. Sacrifice and blood ...

ILLYRIA. My grandfather passed this key onto me so that I never forget the legacy of struggle and our will to survive.

HENRY. There's a spider engraved on it.

MARICELA. Yeah, what does that mean?

ILLYRIA. That spider is Anansi.