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Mariposa/Butterfly

By

SANDRA FENICHEL ASHER

and JOSÉ CASAS

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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(MARIPOSA/BUTTERFLY)

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Mariposa/Butterfly was developed through a virtual workshop with New York University’s New Plays for Young Audiences in June 2021 with the following team:

DirectorJosé Cruz González
Actors Dani Berkowitz,
Lluvia Ilusion Alma, Lindsay Shields
Producer Teresa A. Fisher
Artistic DirectorDavid Montgomery
Puppeteer/“Puppeturg”Johanna Smith
Dramaturg Gina L. Grandi
Stage Manager Cassie Renee Holzum
Assistant Stage Manager..... Zack Palermo

The play received its premier production by Trike Theatre (Bentonville, Ark.) in April 2022.

CAST:

First Neighbor Tizoc Diaz
Second Neighbor..... Kylie Groom Stacy
Puppeteers NaTosha Devon, Justin Mackey

PRODUCTION:

Director Emily Kohring
Puppet Design/InstructorMike Horner,
Mesner Puppet Theatre
Stage Manager/Understudy..... Justin Mackey
Head of Production Shannon Miller
Lighting Design Elijah DeWitt
Prop Design.....Laura Happel
Sound Design Keefer Roach
Scenic Artist Octavio Logo
Costume Design Tanner McAlpin
Scenic Design.....Kathryn Cook
Scenic Painters Addison Griffin, Laiken Montgomery

Mariposa/Butterfly

CHARACTERS

FIRST NEIGHBOR: A recent immigrant from Mexico. Speaks Spanish but is trying to learn English. A bit pompous and blustery in a comical way. Has a vegetable garden and plays a musical instrument and/or sings when remembering home.

SECOND NEIGHBOR: A multigenerational Texan. Speaks English but understands a little Spanish. Also a bit pompous and blustery in a comical way. Has a flower garden and plays a musical instrument and/or sings when remembering childhood.

BUTTERFLY and CATERPILLAR: Puppets handled by a single puppeteer.

TIME: Spring, the present.

PLACE: Two adjoining front yards in Texas.

NOTE: Production notes pertaining to casting, physicality, music and puppets can be found in the back of the book.

DEDICATIONS

With gratitude to my friend and colleague José Casas and to the beautiful world of Theatre for Young Audiences that brought us together.

—Sandra Fenichel Asher

Also with gratitude to my friend and colleague Sandra Fenichel Asher, as well as to my friend Emily Petkewich Kohring who helped this story come to life on the stage.

—José Casas

Mariposa/Butterfly

“Nature’s message was always there and for us to see.
It was written on the wings of butterflies.”

—Kjell B. Sandved

SETTING: *The stage is divided in half down the middle, upstage to downstage, by the suggestion of a low picket fence. There needs to be space in the fence so that the puppeteer can pass through it easily rather than stepping over it. At the downstage end of that is a gate between the two yards, but it doesn't open until the end of the play. That moment may be mimed. UR is FIRST NEIGHBOR's house. UL is SECOND NEIGHBOR's house. FIRST NEIGHBOR has a vegetable garden with a clump of milkweed growing far DR. SECOND NEIGHBOR has a flower garden with an azalea bush blooming far DL.*

AT RISE: *BUTTERFLY's theme music plays. BUTTERFLY rises out of the milkweed DR, flutters around the stage and disappears into the azalea bush. Music fades.*

FIRST NEIGHBOR *(emerges from his house, looks around and proclaims with overblown self-satisfaction and pride).*
Mi casa.

SECOND NEIGHBOR *(emerges from her house, looks around and proclaims with equally overblown self-satisfaction and pride).* **My** house.

FIRST NEIGHBOR *(moves forward).* **Mi** jardín.

SECOND NEIGHBOR *(moves forward).* **My** garden.

FIRST NEIGHBOR. **Mis** vegetales.

SECOND NEIGHBOR. **My** flowers!

(They notice each other, cautious and untrusting. A beat, then they speak, but with comical aloofness.)

FIRST NEIGHBOR *(without enthusiasm)*. *Hola.*

SECOND NEIGHBOR *(without enthusiasm)*. Hello.

FIRST NEIGHBOR *(gestures toward garden)*. *Mi jardín!*

SECOND NEIGHBOR *(unimpressed)*. Your garden, yes.
(Gestures toward her garden.) My garden!

FIRST NEIGHBOR *(unimpressed)*. *Su jardín. Si.* *(Pulls up a carrot.)* **Mi** zanahorias.

SECOND NEIGHBOR *(gestures toward azalea bush)*. **My** azaleas.

(Awkward pause. FIRST NEIGHBOR takes a defiant bite out of the carrot and chews emphatically.)

A beat, and then SECOND NEIGHBOR takes a sprig of azalea and uses it as a hair, hat or buttonhole adornment.

The two observe each other with obvious disdain. A beat.)

SECOND NEIGHBOR *(cont'd, a haughty dismissal)*. Well ...

FIRST NEIGHBOR *(a haughty dismissal)*. Pues ...

SECOND NEIGHBOR. Hmmmmm ...

FIRST NEIGHBOR. Hmmmmm ...

(Another awkward pause. Then SECOND NEIGHBOR heads back to her house.)

SECOND NEIGHBOR. Good day, then.

FIRST NEIGHBOR. *Qué qué?*

(SECOND NEIGHBOR sarcastically waves “goodbye” to FIRST NEIGHBOR, who is annoyed by the gesture and brushes it off.)

FIRST NEIGHBOR *(heading back to his house)*. *Adiós.*

(Both turn away, shrugging and dismissing the whole exchange as distasteful. They exit into their houses. Doors slam, one after the other.)

BUTTERFLY’s theme music plays. BUTTERFLY rises out of the azalea DL, flutters around stage and disappears into the milkweed DR. Music fades.

A beat and then lights dim indicating a cloudy day. FIRST NEIGHBOR steps out of his house without an umbrella as SECOND NEIGHBOR steps out of her house holding an umbrella. Both look up at the sky and hold out a hand to test for precipitation.)

SECOND NEIGHBOR. I think it is going to rain soon.

FIRST NEIGHBOR *(confused)*. *No entiendo.*

SECOND NEIGHBOR *(louder, slower and gesturing rain falling)*. I ... think ... it’s ... going ... to ... rain ... soon.

FIRST NEIGHBOR *(annoyed, nodding)*. *Sí. Sí. La lluvia.*

SECOND NEIGHBOR. Very soon.

FIRST NEIGHBOR *(first response in English)*. Soon?

SECOND NEIGHBOR *(first response in Spanish)*. *Sí.*

FIRST NEIGHBOR *(Spanish version of “get out of here”)*.
Aaaaa, estas loca!

SECOND NEIGHBOR *(offended)*. No!

FIRST NEIGHBOR. *¡Sí!*

SECOND NEIGHBOR. You—

FIRST NEIGHBOR. *Tú—*

(The sound of thunder fills the air. A beat.)

FIRST NEIGHBOR *(cont'd)*. *Va a llover. Rade or temprano.*

SECOND NEIGHBOR. Sooner or later, it will rain.

FIRST NEIGHBOR. *Lo sé.*

SECOND NEIGHBOR. Sooner.

FIRST NEIGHBOR. *Más tarde.*

SECOND NEIGHBOR. Later.

FIRST NEIGHBOR. *O, temprano.*

(An awkward pause. They look at the sky. They hold out a hand. They look at the umbrella. They look at the sky again.)

SECOND NEIGHBOR. Well ...

FIRST NEIGHBOR. *Pues ...*

SECOND NEIGHBOR. Hmmmmm ...

FIRST NEIGHBOR. Hmmmmm ...

(Having completely confused themselves now, both abruptly disappear into their houses. Doors slam, one after the other.

A beat, and then SECOND NEIGHBOR comes out without an umbrella, and FIRST NEIGHBOR comes out with an umbrella. It's become a competition now to be the one who is right. Except, what's right? Again, they look at the sky and hold out a hand to test for precipitation.)

FIRST NEIGHBOR *(cont'd)*. *Tarde o temprano lloverá.*

SECOND NEIGHBOR. Later or sooner, it will rain.

FIRST NEIGHBOR. *Ya te dije.*

SECOND NEIGHBOR. I already told you.

PRODUCTION NOTES

CASTING: Within the script, the NEIGHBORS are gendered, but directors are encouraged to cast their production and update any gendered terms at their discretion.

PHYSICALITY: For both NEIGHBORS, think of masters of physical humor like Mario Fortino, Alfonso Moreno Reyes, Lucille Ball and Charlie Chaplin. Make full use of exaggerated facial expression and gesture as well as language as they struggle to outdo each other even while trying to communicate. They are not simply repeating or translating one another; each is using language, expression and gesture to insist he or she is right/more important/better. The lack of understanding/competition between them has been going on well before the action of the play.

MUSIC: There is no set music for the various themes throughout the play, encouraging directors to be creative with their choices. If desired, the playing of instruments could be staged as a mimed experience set to offstage music.

PUPPETS: The BUTTERFLY and CATERPILLAR represent the natural world throughout the story. In no way should they be anthropomorphized, even when the characters insist otherwise. They are what they are in nature, no more and no less.