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Tomás and the Library Lady

Adapted by
JOSÉ CRUZ GONZÁLEZ

Based upon the book by
PAT MORA

Dramatic Publishing Company
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Based upon the book *Tomás and the Library Lady*
by PAT MORA

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(TOMÁS AND THE LIBRARY LADY)

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Tomás and the Library Lady was commissioned by Childsplay (Artistic Director David Saar, Managing Director Steve Martin) and premiered in May 2006.

CAST:

ACTOR #1 Marcos Najera, Ricardo D. Araiza

ACTOR #2 Heather Harper, Yolanda London

PRODUCTION:

Director David Saar

Musical Arrangements/Consultant Adam Jacobson

Scenic and Costume Design Holly Windingstad

Animation Eric Ting

Sound and Projection Anthony Runfola

Lighting Design Michael J. Eddy

Stage Managers Kristen Pierce, Karla Frederick

Associate Production Manager Gretchen Schaefer

Production Manager Anthony Runfola

In 2007, Childsplay began its first national tour of *Tomás and the Library Lady*.

CAST:

ACTOR #1 Marcos Najera, Israel Jiménez

ACTOR #2 Gina Handy, Andréa Morales

PRODUCTION:

Stage Manager Tiffany Owen

Company Manager Adam Jacobson

In the 13 years since the play's premiere, Childsplay productions alone have reached more than 500,000 young people across the United States.

Dedicated to Albert Soto

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to Concepción Rivera; Enrique Rivera; the Tomás Rivera Archives, University Library Special Collections, University of California, Riverside; Dr. Melissa Conway; Sheryl Davis; Darian Davies; Sara Stille; Eric Milenkiewicz; Cuong Pham; Judy Harper; Hampton Public Library; Tim Wadham; Maricopa County Library District; Jaime Dempsey; Domnita Dumitrescu; Cory González; and Pat Mora.

Tomás and the Library Lady was workshopped at Childsplay in May 2005 and September 2005. The participating artists were Pamela Sterling, Drew Chap, Debra K. Stevens, Dwayne Hartford, Lillie Richardson, Todd Stall, Deb Vaughn, Gretchen Schaefer, Ruth George, Tim Wada, Tim Wadham, Holly Windingstad, Eric Ting, Marcos Najera, Heather Harper, Adam Jacobson, Kristen Pierce, Anthony Runfola, Adam Burke and David Saar.

The Pew Charitable Trusts, Theatre Communications Group National Theatre Artist Residency Program and Arizona State University Piper Center for Creative Writing supported the development of *Tomás and the Library Lady*.

Tomás and the Library Lady

CHARACTERS

ACTOR #1: plays FLORENCIO and PAPÁ GRANDE.

ACTOR #2: plays JOSEFA and ENRIQUE.

ACTOR #3: plays YOUNG TOMÁS and ADULT TOMÁS.

ACTOR #4: plays NIGHTMARE TEACHER and LIBRARY LADY.

CASTING NOTES

To create a two-actor version:

ACTOR #1 plays FLORENCIO, YOUNG TOMÁS, voice of PAPÁ GRANDE and ADULT TOMÁS.

ACTOR #2 plays NIGHTMARE TEACHER, JOSEFA, LIBRARY LADY and ENRIQUE.

The number of roles may also be increased by assigning each character a singular actor. Additional characters may be added as ensemble or as musicians.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The original two-actor production used projected video for Nightmare Teacher, animation for Papá Grande and photographs of the real Tomás Rivera. Photos of Tomás Rivera can be found via the Tomás Rivera Archives, University Library Special Collections, University of California, Riverside. Any usage must be credited. Projections are not required.

MUSIC: Customers are encouraged to produce their own music to accompany the lyrics printed in the playbook. The music created for the original production is available directly from Childsplay at (480) 921-5700 or info@childsplayaz.org.

“Love is necessary in the classroom. A teacher should realize that if he has love for children he will be creating lasting happy individuals. A degree of love brings security to a child and makes him feel worthwhile. A child realizes he is loved and in turn will respond as a unique individual to that love.”

—Tomás Rivera, 1961

“It is impossible to imagine Chicano literature without the migrant worker.”

—Tomás Rivera,
The Great Plains as Refuge in Chicano Literature

“The Great Plains have a special attraction to me as a person and as a fiction writer. I spent half of my first 20 years in one or another Midwestern or Great Plains state. As a child and as a young man, I lived in Iowa, the Dakotas, Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Ohio.”

—Tomás Rivera,
The Great Plains as Refuge in Chicano Literature

Tomás and the Library Lady

(ACTORS #1, #2, #3 and #4 enter carrying suitcases.)

ACTOR #1. *Tomás*—

ACTOR #2. And the Library Lady!

ACTOR #3. Many years later, he would fondly speak of the little library lady who introduced him to the wonderful world of books.

(ACTOR #4 opens an umbrella.)

ACTOR #4. And every now and then, on a quiet summer afternoon, she often wondered what ever happened to the little boy who loved to read.

(ACTOR #3 opens a book.)

ALL. This is their story.

(ACTORS #1 and #2 transform into FLORENCIO and JOSEFA throughout the song.)

(SONG: “Vámonos P’al Norte”)

ALL.

VÁMONOS P’AL NORTE
CAMINANDO CON MUCHA FE
A BUSCAR UN JALE
QUE DIOS NOS CUIDE

PISCA, PISCA, PISCA
PISCA, PISCA, PISCA
BETABEL,
ESPINACA

ACTOR #1 (*whistling*). *¡Vámonos p'al norte!*

ACTOR #2. *¡Tomás! ¡Enrique!*

ACTOR #1. *¡Métese al carro!*

ACTOR #2. *¡Ándale, muchachos!*

(They load their suitcases into an imaginary car.)

ALL.

WE'RE GOING TO THE NORTHLAND
 WE'RE WORKING WITH OUR HANDS
 WE'RE TRAVELING A ROAD PAVED WITH STRIFE
 IN SEARCH OF A BETTER LIFE

WE PICK, PICK, PICK
 PICK, PICK, PICK
 PICK, PICK, PICK
 PICK, PICK, PICK
 BEETS,
 AND SPINACH TOO

(A car travels on the road at night.)

ACTOR #1. *Era medianoche.*

ACTOR #4. It was midnight.

ACTOR #2. *En una carretera larga y llena de baches.*

ACTOR #3. On a long and bumpy road.

ACTOR #1. *La luz de la luna llena seguía a un viejo carro cansado.*

ACTOR #4. The light of the full moon followed a tired, old car.

ACTOR #2. *Y una familia de campesinos dormía en la parte de atrás.*

ACTOR #3. And a farm-worker family slept in the back.

ACTOR #4. Dreaming of bright tomorrows.

ACTOR #2. While a young mother—

ACTOR #1. And father—

ACTORS #1 & #2. Worried over their son.

ACTOR #3. *En su mundo sólo hablaban español.*

ACTOR #4. In their world, they only spoke Spanish.

ACTORS #1 & #2. This is what they said.

(FLORENCIO and JOSEFA sit, traveling in a car. They place a blanket over a suitcase, making it appear as if someone is sleeping underneath.)

JOSEFA. *Florencio*, we shouldn't have taken *Tomás* out of school.

FLORENCIO. We had no choice.

JOSEFA. I want his life to be far better than ours.

FLORENCIO. Don't you think I want that for both our sons?

JOSEFA. If only we had stayed in *Tejas*—

FLORENCIO. We would have starved. My *compadre* says there's plenty of work in Iowa. I promise you when we've earned enough money, we'll go back home and *Tomás* can start school in the fall again.

JOSEFA. He's going to be so far behind when he returns.

FLORENCIO. Maybe we can help prepare him somehow.

JOSEFA. *¿Cómo?*

FLORENCIO. I don't know how, but we'll ask *Papá Grande* when he wakes up. He'll think of something.

JOSEFA. I just wish—

FLORENCIO. *Josefa*, what's troubling you?

JOSEFA. *Tomás* has been tossing and turning in his sleep again.

FLORENCIO. You needn't worry. He'll be fine.

JOSEFA. Something's haunting him in his dreams, I know it.

(A school bell is rung, echoing into an ominous sound. YOUNG TOMÁS has a nightmare. From inside the suitcase emerges a frightening image of the NIGHTMARE TEACHER.)

NIGHTMARE TEACHER. I pledge allegiance to the flag—
YOUNG TOMÁS. ¿Maestra?

NIGHTMARE TEACHER. How many times have I told
you to speak English young man?

YOUNG TOMÁS. ¿Qué dices?

NIGHTMARE TEACHER. I'm putting a stop to this
behavior once and for all!

YOUNG TOMÁS. ¡No entiendo!

NIGHTMARE TEACHER. I won't stand for this in my
classroom! Do you understand me?

YOUNG TOMÁS. ¿Maestra?

NIGHTMARE TEACHER. Say it, Tommy, I will not
daydream, be lazy or speak Spanish! Say it, say it or I'll
get you!

YOUNG TOMÁS. ¡'Amá!

(The suitcase is slammed shut by JOSEFA. She is now driving the old car. YOUNG TOMÁS awakens. A car horn is heard from a passing car.)

JOSEFA. Tomás, tuviste un mal sueño.

YOUNG TOMÁS. It felt real, 'Amá.

JOSEFA. What was your nightmare about?

YOUNG TOMÁS. I don't want to talk about it.

(*YOUNG TOMÁS drinks from a canteen.*)

JOSEFA. *Tomás*, slow down before you make yourself sick!

YOUNG TOMÁS. I'm so thirsty!

JOSEFA. *Despacio*.

YOUNG TOMÁS. If I had *un vaso de agua fría* I would drink it *todo*!

JOSEFA. Slow down.

YOUNG TOMÁS. I would suck the ice and pour the last *gotitas* of water on my face.

JOSEFA. Better?

YOUNG TOMÁS. No.

(*JOSEFA hugs YOUNG TOMÁS.*)

JOSEFA. Hugs are the best thing, you know? They make you feel better and they cost nothing.

YOUNG TOMÁS. I feel better.

JOSEFA. Good. I know that taking you out of school wasn't—

YOUNG TOMÁS. '*Amá*, I don't want to talk about it.

JOSEFA. But in the fall, you'll return to the same teacher and—

YOUNG TOMÁS. Please, '*Amá*!

JOSEFA. Fine, I won't bring it up anymore unless you want.

(*PAPÁ GRANDE is heard snoring loudly.*)

YOUNG TOMÁS. *Papá Grande* is snoring again.

JOSEFA. I don't think anyone is going to get much sleep tonight.

YOUNG TOMÁS. He sounds like a big old giant.

YOUNG TOMÁS & JOSEFA. *Papá Grande*, you're snoring again!

JOSEFA. Turn over!

(PAPÁ GRANDE snorts and then sleeps quietly.)

YOUNG TÓMAS. That's better.

JOSEFA. You know, your *Papá Grande* is always reminding your father and I how smart and talented you are.

YOUNG TOMÁS. He does?

JOSEFA. Your *Papá Grande* thinks that someday you're going to be a great writer or a famous painter.

YOUNG TOMÁS. ¿De veras?

JOSEFA. He's always saying—

(PAPÁ GRANDE's big white mustache appears.)

PAPÁ GRANDE. *Un escritor* writes great thoughts and *un pintor* paints great paintings. Some say that *artistas* are *locos*, but I say they are touched by God's own brilliant madness.

JOSEFA. My *papá* is wise, but I sure wish he'd trim that big, bushy mustache. I can't bear to watch him eat—

(PAPÁ GRANDE sneezes loudly.)

PAPÁ GRANDE. Achooo!

JOSEFA. Or sneeze!

YOUNG TOMÁS. ¡Salud, Papá Grande!

PAPÁ GRANDE. ¡Gracias, Tomásito!

(A car tire is heard exploding.)

JOSEFA. ¡Ay, la llanta!

YOUNG TOMÁS. Is it a flat tire?

JOSEFA. Ah huh. ¡Florencio!

(*YOUNG TOMÁS and JOSEFA step out of the car. A full moon appears. We hear crickets and the car being repaired.*)

YOUNG TOMÁS. Where are we now, 'Amá?

JOSEFA. Somewhere in Iowa. Far away from *Tejas*.

YOUNG TOMÁS (*under his breath*). And school.

JOSEFA. What?

YOUNG TOMÁS. Nothing. We've been driving forever.

JOSEFA. It won't be much longer before we're at the camp.

YOUNG TOMÁS. How can 'Apá even tell where we're going when it's night?

JOSEFA. Your 'Apá can see *muy bien* because of the light of a full moon and the headlights of the *carro* shine on the passing road signs.

(*YOUNG TOMÁS yawns.*)

YOUNG TOMÁS. 'Amá, what do you think about when you don't sleep?

JOSEFA. Mostly it's about you and your brother *Enrique*. And you?

YOUNG TOMÁS. I think about lots of things. Sleeping isn't one of them.

JOSEFA. I think about what you'll grow up to be. Will you live near your 'Apá and me when we're old? Will you laugh and be silly like your *Papá Grande*? Will you be happy?

YOUNG TOMÁS. 'Amá, you don't have nothing to worry about 'cause I'm never going to grow up or move away. I'll live with you, 'Apá, and *Papá Grande*, forever.

JOSEFA. When I was your age I said the same thing to my *mamá* and *papá*. Then I sprouted into a young lady. I met your 'Apá and fell in love.

YOUNG TOMÁS. Yuck!

JOSEFA. We got married.

YOUNG TOMÁS. Yuck, I'm never, ever, going to marry a girl!

JOSEFA. Never say never and forever is a long time.

FLORENCIO (*offstage*). ¡Vámonos!

(YOUNG TOMÁS and JOSEFA sit in the front seat of the car. She continues driving. YOUNG TOMÁS plays with his toy car and then looks back at the moon.)

YOUNG TOMÁS. I think the moon is following us, 'Amá.

(She stops the car. The moon stops moving.)

JOSEFA. ¿La luna?

YOUNG TOMÁS. Let's look.

YOUNG TOMÁS & JOSEFA. *Uno, dos, tres.*

(They look back. Beat. She starts driving again. The moon follows.)

YOUNG TOMÁS. Yeah, when we left *Tejas*, the moon was in the sky right behind us.

JOSEFA. That was days ago.

YOUNG TOMÁS & JOSEFA. *Uno, dos, tres.*

(They look again. The moon stops. They look back once again. Nothing. She drives on as the moon follows.)

YOUNG TOMÁS. And each night *la luna* is still in the same place. I think the moon is a lost puppy.

(YOUNG TOMÁS barks at the moon.)

JOSEFA. Silly boy.

(The moon howls back.)

YOUNG TOMÁS. I like the quiet of night and how the tires make the road hum and that our *familia* stays together. I bet that you and me are the only people in the whole world awake tonight.

JOSEFA. It's feels that way, doesn't it?

(JOSEFA yawns.)

YOUNG TOMÁS. 'Amá, don't you ever get sleepy?

JOSEFA. Yes, I do, but it's my turn to drive. I wouldn't want to fall asleep while driving, *¿qué no?*

YOUNG TOMÁS. Yeah, 'cause we might end up falling off a giant cliff or into a fiery lava pit or maybe even get swallowed up by the earth and never be found!

JOSEFA. ¡Ay, no!

YOUNG TOMÁS. 'Amá, what's Iowa like?

JOSEFA. It's a big country with lots of work. Your 'Apá and I and *Papá Grande* are going to pick crops there.

YOUNG TOMÁS. Like what?

JOSEFA. *Elotes*, corn.

YOUNG TOMÁS. Yuck!

JOSEFA. *Betabeles*, beets.

YOUNG TOMÁS. Double yuck!

JOSEFA. *Espinaca*, spinach.

YOUNG TOMÁS. I'm never eating that!

JOSEFA. There'll be plenty of it and you'll eat it all, *señor!*

(YOUNG TOMÁS yawns and lays his head down. Music. YOUNG TOMÁS falls asleep.)

(SONG: “En Paz”)

JOSEFA.

DUERME, DUERME, DUERME, NIÑO,
SUEÑA, SUEÑA, SUEÑA, MI LINDO,
DUERME, DUERME, DUERME, HIJO,
SUEÑA, SUEÑA, SUEÑA, MI ÁNGEL,
EN PAZ, EN PAZ, EN PAZ—

We’re here.

(FLORENCIO and JOSEFA stand looking at an old run-down wooden shack. A single chicken is heard.)

FLORENCIO. *Bueno, Josefa, éste es nuestro hogar.*

JOSEFA. *Florencio, it’s a chicken coop.*

FLORENCIO. I know it isn’t much.

JOSEFA. We’re not chickens. Shoo!

FLORENCIO. It could be worse.

JOSEFA. How?

FLORENCIO. We could be living in a car or a tent or out in the open air. This is the only housing there is in Hampton for migrant workers like us. It’s all the *patrón* can provide.

(A single chicken is heard again.)

JOSEFA. I would like to see his house. I bet it isn’t a chicken coop. Shoo!

FLORENCIO. We’re one of the lucky families.

JOSEFA. If this is luck, then I don’t want it.

FLORENCIO. It’s the best I can do, *Amor. Lo siento*. There’s nowhere else.

JOSEFA. I bet it isn’t even clean.

FLORENCIO. I asked some of the *muchachos* in the camp to sweep it before we arrived.

JOSEFA. I bet there're salamanders and spiders.

FLORENCIO. If there are, I'll take care of them. *Te lo prometo.*

JOSEFA. I bet it isn't even big enough for two families.

FLORENCIO. I think it could be.

JOSEFA. Well, it's going to take a lot of work.

FLORENCIO. *Papá Grande* and I can put up a divider to make two rooms, one room where we can sleep, and the other for a kitchen.

JOSEFA. We could use some scraps of wood and cardboard to fill up the slats. That'll do to keep cold, salamanders and spiders out.

FLORENCIO. That's a good idea. You'll see, *Josefa*, once we're through fixing up this *casita*, it'll be just like our—

JOSEFA. Don't even say it! My house in *Tejas* is not a chicken coop!

FLORENCIO. I'll fix it the way you want.

(He embraces her.)

JOSEFA. *Gracias a Dios* we made it safely to Iowa.

FLORENCIO. It pays to have *el padre* bless the *carro*. We only broke down once and we had enough gas rations to get us here.

(Moonlight.)

ACTOR #3. *Tomás* curled up on the floor in the small house that his family shared with the other workers. He opened his eyes momentarily to see the moon shining brightly as if waiting for him to come out and play.