



THE CORE ENSEMBLE PRESENTS

# ***LAS MAGNIFICAS***

**Three Legendary Latinas & the Transformative Power of Music**

**LAS MAGNIFICAS** is a Chamber Music Theatre piece for singing actress and trio (cello, piano and percussion) exploring the lives and times of three towering figures in Latin American cultural history: the iconic Mexican Ranchera singer Chavela Vargas, Cuban Singer Celia Cruz, "The Queen of Salsa" and Chilean Singer Violeta Parra, the Mother of Latin American Folk Music. Text by Marjorie Agosin. Music to include songs made famous by the artists: Tu Voz, Gracias a la Vida, La Vida es un Carnaval, La Llorona and Volver a los 17, as well as instrumental music by Latin American Composers: Ernesto Lecuona, Eduardo Sanchez de Fuentes, Jose Alfredo Jimenez, Victor Jara, and Tania Leon.

Welcome!

We are delighted to have you and your students in the audience of LAS MAGNIFICAS.

In order to assist you in responding to the performance, these materials are provided to assist you in tying your classroom work to the production. They are intended to be used following the performance as a catalyst for discussion and further research by your students about the information and ideas in the piece.

Although the careers of Chavela Vargas, Celia Cruz, and Violeta Parra took place several generations ago, we are particularly interested in how your students find the collective body of work by these women to be relevant in today's world. Therefore, these materials are less curricular-focused, and more thematically-focused. We encourage you to use these materials to promote dialogue and debate.

Questions or comments about LAS MAGNIFICAS are welcome. Please let us know how we're doing and about the experience of this production. On your school's website you and your students can post reviews as well as respond to reviews written by other students.

Thank you for continuing the conversation which this production merely begins, in its powerful and impassioned call for justice, compassion, and humanity.

Margot Emery  
Managing Director  
**THE CORE ENSEMBLE**

To do, or not to do. That is the question.

**character / personaje / χαρακτήρα / personnage / ??????? / charakter / carattere / 名声,名誉 / znak / 文字 / de caractere / □□□□□□ / karaktär / характер / .....**

... a universal word, of universal importance. And with several different definitions. In the case of *LAS MAGNIFICAS* specific meanings come to mind.

**char · ac · ter:** *ker-ik-tər:* **1:** one of the persons of a drama or novel  
**2:** the personality or part which an actor recreates <an actress who can create a *character* convincingly>;  
PERSONAGE.

Chivela Vargas, Celia Cruz, and Violeta Parra – each is an historical person given a dramatic personality created by writer Margorie Agosin in *LAS MAGNIFICAS*. Each of the three women is recreated by an actress whenever this piece is performed.

But another meaning for this word has even greater relevance.

**char · ac · ter:** *ker-ik-tər:* **1:** one of the attributes or features that make up and distinguish an individual;  
REPUTATION: **2:** moral excellence and firmness <a man of sound *character*>.

In *LAS MAGNIFICAS* three women are faced with situations that require choices, followed by decision-making and corresponding behavior. These circumstances create conflict with others or within themselves, including conflicts which sometimes are humorous.

But often as the conflicts hold a deeper level of personal questioning – requiring the characters to assess their own values, followed by taking action. In these situations, we realize that risk and courage can be a part of making the appropriate choice.

*What is the right thing to do?*

This is a question which we are always learning to better ask and to better answer.

*Character Counts!* is an approach to character education administered by the non-profit Josephsen Institute’s Center for Youth Ethics. It is a program designed around on six basic values called “Pillars of Character.” These values are: *trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.*

These values exist across diverse cultures, religious faiths, and spiritual programs. They are the basis for standards of conduct – personal and public. Just as young people today face daily challenges in ethical decision-making inside their schools and communities, we can find examples throughout *LAS MAGNIFICAS* in which these three women display or disregard these values.

Using the grid below, “grade” or rank each woman as to whether she demonstrated or ignored any of the six values at some point. Each box can be filled in **Y** (yes), **N** (no), or **M** (maybe). Identify an example of what she said or did that illustrates or supports the ranking.

It is likely that there will be both unanimity as well disagreement in this exercise! This is fine – it is such dialogue and debate that are an essential and valuable part of the process of critical thinking.

	Trustworthiness	Respect	Responsibility	Fairness	Caring	Citizenship
CHAVELA VARGAS						
CELIZ CRUZ						
VIOLETA PARRA						

Again, *what is the right thing to do?*

*What is the right thing to do?*

*What is the right thing to do?*

### **Trustworthiness**

Be honest • Don't deceive, cheat or steal • Be reliable — do what you say you'll do • Have the courage to do the right thing • Build a good reputation • Be loyal — stand by your family, friends and country

### **Respect**

Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule • Be tolerant of differences • Use good manners, not bad language • Be considerate of the feelings of others • Don't threaten, hit or hurt anyone • Deal peacefully with anger, insults and disagreements

### **Responsibility**

Do what you are supposed to do • Persevere: keep on trying! • Always do your best • Use self-control • Be self-disciplined • Think before you act — consider the consequences • Be accountable for your choices

### **Fairness**

Play by the rules • Take turns and share • Be open-minded; listen to others • Don't take advantage of others • Don't blame others carelessly

### **Caring**

Be kind • Be compassionate and show you care • Express gratitude • Forgive others • Help people in need

### **Citizenship**

Do your share to make your school and community better • Cooperate • Get involved in community affairs • Stay informed; vote • Be a good neighbor • Obey laws and rules • Respect authority • Protect the environment



## **COURAGE**

*Chavela, Celia, and Violeta would certainly qualify  
as having "the right stuff"  
in the eyes of these esteemed figures.*

***"Any intelligent fool can make things bigger and more complex... It takes a touch of genius - and a lot of courage to move in the opposite direction."***

Albert Einstein

***"Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen."***

Winston Churchill

***"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."***

Winston Churchill



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## **CHAVELA VARGAS QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

Below are script excerpts from the Chavela scene in LAS MAGNIFICAS.  
Ask students to read, reflect, and respond.

### **#1**

*“How long did I drink? You don’t want to know --- I had an iron liver! But then, finally one night – when was this? -- wandering about the edge of the city – I had gotten lost in the dark and rain after leaving a filthy nightclub -- submerged in an alcoholic haze, so I really don’t recall how this happened -- a native Shaman family from the countryside found me. They took me in. Over many, many months, they nursed me back to health without knowing who I was. Slowly I began to see this beloved land with clearer and clearer eyes. I didn’t realize it, but desperation had become a gift. I could not remain the same. I wanted to change, and I slowly learned that I was not alone.”*

How does desperation become a gift for an alcoholic or addict?

### **#2**

*“I wasn’t the playful little girl with lots of friends. I never played with dolls. I was a dreamer . . . I grew up alone in a typical family of that time -- very religious and very prejudiced. They treated me like a leper. Most people did. One day when I was about seven years old, I wandered into our church during the middle of the sermon and the priest yelled, ‘That girl can’t come in here. Get her out now.’  
Yes, tomboys don’t belong in church.”*

What effects might this priest’s message have on a seven-year-old girl? (Or if the child were a young boy.) What implications might this priest’s message have on members of any age in the congregation?

### **#3**

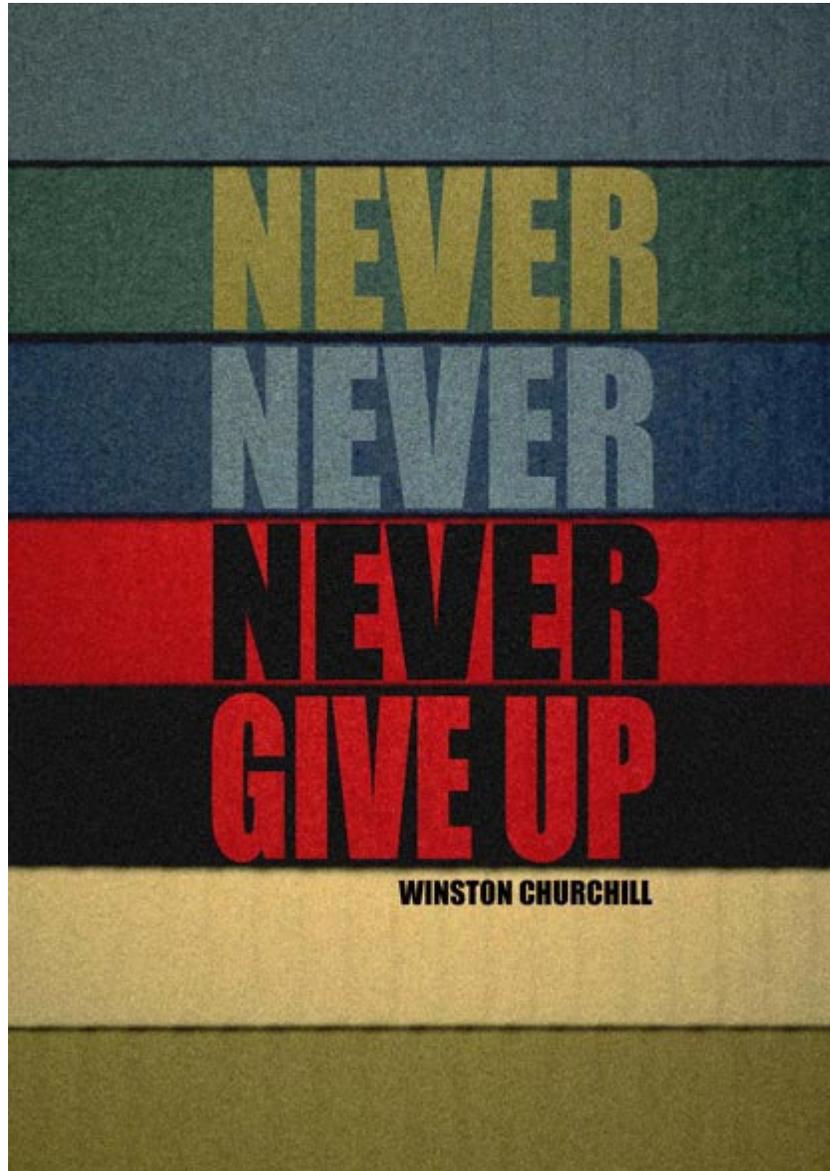
*“I love women. I was born this way. Since I opened my eyes to the world, I have never slept with a man. Never. Just imagine what purity. I have nothing to be ashamed of.”*

In 2022 are there still risks for a leading entertainer in the music industry to come out as gay, bisexual, non-binary, or transgender? Are there advantages? Who benefits?

#### **#4**

*“By then, my beautiful eyes were turning yellow. When there was no beer or tequila before a show, I drank soda with rubbing alcohol. It was all I could afford. I became famous for performing blind drunk, rolling drunk, roaring drunk. Life had offered me the most beautiful things that a human being can have, and I -- I preferred to sink into alcohol. Then I stopped getting hired. I stopped singing . . . Can I really do this? . . . Can I sing without drinking?”*

Chavela is at high risk for relapsing and taking a drink – right before going onstage. Research and discuss popular figures in the music, film, and television industries who struggled to get sober and then to remaining sober.



**CELIA CRUZ QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

Below are script excerpts from the Celia Cruz scene in LAS MAGNIFICAS.  
Ask students to read, reflect, and respond.

**#1**

*“When strangers notice me, they see that I am African and Cuban.  
I am every color. I am black. I love the shade of my night-colored skin.  
Many think that I have too many colors in my hair.  
Hair as red as the most passionate poppy flowers.  
And hair that is golden like the tropical sun.  
My most beloved hair, however, is that which is mine.*

*Hair as deep as an African night."*

Discuss the ways that colorism, or discrimination based on skin complexion, plays a role in how school communities operate.

**#2**

*"I sang to console the youngest that suffered from unbearable hunger . . . In singing contests, I didn't always earn money. They gave us bags of food; I even won a cake. I sang to console those who wandered lost amid the thickness of rum. My father didn't want me to be a singer, but my mother told me "Don't listen to that man, you keep singing." My voice sparkled like the sea, startling even me with its rich sounds."*

Why did Celia's father not want for her to be a singer?  
What does it take for a son or daughter to choose  
the position of one parent over the other?

**#4**

*"Don't be afraid. You will always be this flamboyant Celia dressed in green feathers and red shoes. My voice is inseparable from the woman I am."*

How does Celia ultimately justify making the decision to leave Cuba and move to New York in order to continue her career?

**#4**

*"I think of my island Cuba and what is happening... 1960, the new communist government -- la revolucion. I love my country, but I don't love Castro's government... All these choices: My sweetheart Pedro wants to marry me, but can I trust him? If he and I go to America the Cuban government will never allow us to return home. And now, back in Cuba, mi Papa is near death. Mother is not much better. Night falls like a shower of blue tears; night falls upon me here in Mexico and I ask myself what it means to betray a country."*

What are contemporary parallels in our recent world events in which families are forced to choose between remaining in their native countries under authoritative regimes, or escaping the dictatorial governments

and fleeing to asylum in democratic nations – knowing that they may never be able to return home again?



*Cuban people trying to escape from Communism.*

**VIOLETA PARRA QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

Below are script excerpts from the Violeta Parra scene in LAS MAGNIFICAS.

Ask students to read, reflect, and respond.

**#1**

*“At first, I began singing folk songs in the bars of Santiago.  
Travelling by foot, I toured almost the entire country of Chile  
and uncovered its folklore.*

*We live in our roots, not on our branches.*

*Peasant wisdom transforms tragedy into a beautiful fact of life.”*

What does it mean to “live in our roots, not on our branches”?  
What is peasant wisdom?

**#2**

*“So, I am an anthropologist.  
And I am a passionate Communist.  
Through the nineteen thirties, forties, fifties, and into the sixties  
I believed it was the only way to give voice  
to these voiceless people.  
Of course, I belong to the communist party!  
As long as it doesn’t interfere with the divine.”*

Compare and contrast the form of communism in Violeta’s Chile  
with communism in Celia’s Cuba.  
How did each woman come to such opposing views?

**#3**

*“I lost my daughter. She was eight months old. It was my fault I wanted to travel.  
She died alone while I was singing to strangers in Europe.  
My little Rosita Clara left for heaven and I could not say goodbye to her.  
I couldn’t even give her little wings  
and dress her like the baby angel she was to me.  
You don’t cry for a dead child; tears wet their wings  
and prevent them from flying into heaven.  
It was my fault for being a mother who abandoned her child.  
I was my fault for having this passion to sing.”*

Keep in mind that Violetta’s created her largest body of work  
during the 1950’s and ’60’s.  
In 2022, do you find Violeta’s sense of guilt  
for placing her career ahead of her child surprising?

**#4**

*“Now, the Queen’s Tent has failed. Why? Cold winters, hot summers,  
great distances. Fewer and fewer people have come,  
and there are barely days when I have enough to eat.  
My face has lost its sense of serenity.  
There is no longer smoothness in my smile. My songs have dried up.  
I am leaving.”*

*When I was a child, I would gaze up at the stars with a kaleidoscope.  
Now they are looking back because they are waiting for me.  
I am leaving.  
The night is beautiful, and it seems like I can touch the stars with my hand.  
My guitar is asleep at my feet.  
I am leaving.  
This is my moment, a time that I have chosen with death no longer remote.  
I must say my goodbyes.  
After all is said and done, I am grateful for a life full of sound and light.  
I love this life.”*

Discuss Violeta’s decision to end her life.



### **CHAVELA VARGAS: HISTORY FACTS AND MAJOR EVENTS OF 1991**

*The opening scene of LAS MAGNIFICAS takes place in 1991. This timeline provides historical context, referencing major events in the United States as a backdrop to Chavela Vargas’ life. Note the many occurrences which have evolved to continue playing out in today’s world. Indeed, past and present mirror each other in both parallel as well as divergent ways.*

- 1. Ask your students to draw correlations between these facts and events from 1991 with current statistics and events today.*
- 2. Ask students to speculate as to how Chavela’s life and work might have been different had she been grown up in Generation Z.*

1. A pound of bacon cost \$1.95, a gallon of milk was \$2.80, a dozen eggs were \$1.01.
2. The average price for a gallon of gas was \$1.14, down from \$1.16 the year before.

3. A first-class stamp cost 29 cents. A pack of cigarettes cost \$1.74.
4. On April 1, the U.S. Department of Labor raised the minimum wage to \$4.25 an hour.
5. Americans paid an average of \$15,473 for a new car.
6. The U.S. unemployment rate averaged 5.6%.
7. The average life expectancy at birth in the U.S. was 75.37 year.
8. The cost of a 30-second Super Bowl ad was \$800,000.
9. Average monthly rent was \$495.
10. On August 23, the World Wide Web was made available to everyone around the world. Today, there are nearly 3.5 billion Internet users worldwide.

#### January

Sharon Pratt Dixon is sworn in as mayor of the District of Columbia, becoming the first African-American woman to be mayor of a U.S. city.

Gulf War. The U.S. Congress passes a resolution authorizing the use of military force to liberate Kuwait. Operation Desert Storm begins with airstrikes against Iraq. In Washington, tens of thousands of people rally against the Persian Gulf War.

#### February

The early 1990s recession ends.

A Michigan court bars Dr. Jack Kevorkian from assisting in suicides.

Gulf War: Part of an Iraqi Scud missile hits an American military barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 29 and injuring 99 U.S. soldiers. It is the single, most devastating attack on U.S. forces during the war.

#### March

An amateur video captures the beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers. Four officers are indicted.

The U.S. Department of Justice announces that Exxon has agreed to pay one billion dollars for the cleanup of the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska.

#### April

The Dow Jones Industrial Average closes above 3,000 for the first time ever, at 3,004.46.

#### May

A riot breaks out in the Mt. Pleasant section of Washington, D.C. after police shoot a Salvadorean man.

Queen Elizabeth II becomes the first British monarch to address the United States Congress.

#### June

Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall announces his retirement from the Supreme Court due to declining health. In his retirement press conference on the following day, he expressed his view that race should not be the basis in selecting his successor.

#### July

President George H.W. Bush nominates Clarence Thomas as the replacement for Associate Justice Thurgood Marshall.

Boxer Mike Tyson is arrested and charged with raping Miss Black America contestant Desiree Washington three days earlier, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

The United States and the Soviet Union sign the START I treaty limiting strategic nuclear weapons.

#### August

The Super Nintendo Entertainment System (or "Super Nintendo") is first released in the United States.

#### September

Dissolution of the Soviet Union: The United States recognizes the independence of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

The trial of the deposed Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega begins in the United States.

#### October

The U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee interviews both Supreme Court candidate Clarence Thomas and former aide Anita Hill, who alleges that Thomas sexually harassed her while she worked for him. The Senate votes to confirm Thomas to the Supreme Court.

#### November

Los Angeles Lakers point guard Magic Johnson announces that he has HIV, effectively ending his NBA career.

Walt Disney Pictures' 30<sup>th</sup> feature film, *Beauty and the Beast*, is released, receiving widespread acclaim and box office success, later becoming the first animated film to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Picture at the 64<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards in early 1992.

Queen lead singer Freddie Mercury dies from AIDS at 45 years old, one day after making his diagnosis public.

#### December

Journalist Terry A. Anderson is released after seven years' captivity as a hostage in Beirut (the last and longest-held American hostage in Lebanon).

The Cold War ends as President of the Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev resigns and the Soviet Union dissolves.



### **CELIA CRUZ: HISTORY FACTS AND MAJOR EVENTS OF 1960**

*The second scene of LAS MAGNIFICAS takes place in 1960. This timeline provides historical context, referencing major events in the United States as a backdrop to Celia Cruz's life. Note the many occurrences which have evolved to continue playing out in today's world. Indeed, past and present mirror each other in both parallel as well as divergent ways.*

- 1. Ask your students to draw correlations between these facts and events from 1960 with current statistics and events today.*
- 2. Ask students to speculate as to how Celia's life and work might have been different had she been grown up in Generation Z.*

1. A pound of bacon cost \$0.65, a gallon of milk was \$0.36, a dozen eggs were \$0.57.
2. The average price for a gallon of gas was \$.31.
3. A first-class stamp cost \$0.04. A pack of cigarettes cost \$0.26.
4. Minimum wage: \$1.00 an hour.
5. Americans paid an average of \$2,600 for a new car.
6. The U.S. unemployment rate averaged 6.6%.
7. The average life expectancy at birth in the U.S. was 70.25 year.
8. The cost of local call from a pay phone: \$0.10.
9. Average monthly rent was \$71.
10. Something which today costs \$9.58 could in 1960 be purchased for \$1.

### January

U.S. Senator John F. Kennedy (Democrat-Massachusetts) announces his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination.

In Washington D.C. the National Association of Broadcasters reacts to the "payola" scandal by threatening fines for any disc jockeys accepting money for playing particular records.

### February

In Greensboro, North Carolina four black students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University begin a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter. Although they are refused service, they are allowed to stay at the counter. The event triggers many similar nonviolent protests throughout the southern United States, and six months later, the original four protesters are served lunch at the same counter.

The first Playboy Club opens in Chicago.

### March

Vietnam War: The United States announces that 3,500 American soldiers will be sent to Vietnam.

Arthur Leonard Schawlow and Charles Hard Townes receive the first patent for a laser.

### April

The United States launches the first weather satellite, TIROS-1.

The 1960 U.S. Census begins. On April 1 there are 19,323,175 U.S. residents. All people from Latin America are listed as white, including blacks from the Dominican Republic; European whites from Argentina; and Mexicans who resemble Native Americans.

### May

A Soviet missile shoots down an American Lockheed U-2 spy plane. The pilot, Gary Powers, is captured.

President Dwight Eisenhower signs the Civil Rights Act of 1960 into law.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announces that it will approve birth control and an additional indication for Searle's, making it the world's first approved oral contraceptive pill.

The Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel opens between Manhattan and Brooklyn

### June

The United States Naval Research Laboratory SOLRAD-1 Galactic Radiation and Background program satellite is successfully launched, serving as the first successful U.S. reconnaissance satellite over the Soviet Union, and returning the first real-time X-ray and ultraviolet observations of the sun.

### July

Following the admission of Hawaii as the 50<sup>th</sup> state the previous year, the 50-star flag of the U.S. debuts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

A Soviet MIG fighter north of Murmansk in the Barents Sea shoots down a six-man RB-47. Two U.S. Air Force officers survive and are imprisoned in Moscow's dreaded Lubyanka prison.

Harper Lee releases her critically acclaimed novel *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

In Chicago, the Republican National Convention nominates U.S. Vice-President for president.

### August

Cuban Revolution: In response to a United States embargo against Cuba, Fidel Castro nationalizes American and foreign-owned property in the nation.

In Moscow, downed American U-2 pilot Gary Powers is sentenced to ten years imprisonment by the Soviet Union for espionage.

### September

The two leading U.S. presidential candidates, Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy, participate in the first televised presidential election debate.

### October

U.S. presidential candidate John F. Kennedy first suggests the idea for the Peace Corps.

Robert F. Kennedy calls Coretta Scott King, wife of Martin Luther King, Jr., and secures his release from jail on a traffic violation.

### November

In a close race, John F. Kennedy is elected over Richard M. Nixon, becoming (at age 43) the youngest man elected president.

African-American singer and entertainer Sammy Davis, Jr. marries Swedish actress May Britt.

New Orleans school desegregation crisis: Ruby Bridges and the McDonogh Three become the first black children to attend an all-white elementary school in Louisiana.

### December

U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower authorized the use of \$1 million for the relief and resettlement of Cuban refugees, who have been arriving in Florida at the rate of 1,000 per week.

*Boynton v. Virginia*: The U.S. Supreme Court declares segregation in public transit to be illegal. The Court also upholds a federal court ruling that Louisiana's segregation laws are unconstitutional.

The first Domino's Pizza location opens in Ypsilanti, Michigan.



### **VIOLETA PARRA: HISTORY FACTS AND MAJOR EVENTS OF 1967**

*The last scene of LAS MAGNIFICAS takes place in 1967. This timeline provides historical context, referencing major events in the United States as a backdrop to Violeta Parra's life. Note the many occurrences which have evolved to continue playing out in today's world. Indeed, past and present mirror each other in both parallel as well as divergent ways.*

1. Ask your students to draw correlations between these facts and events from 1967 with current statistics and events today.
2. Ask students to speculate as to how Violetta's life and work might have been different had she been grown up in Generation Z.

1. A pound of bacon cost \$0.72, a gallon of milk was \$1.03, a dozen eggs were \$0.49.

2. The average price for a gallon of gas was \$.32.
3. A first-class stamp cost \$0.05. A pack of cigarettes cost \$0.32.
4. Minimum wage: \$1.40 an hour.
5. Americans paid an average of \$2,750 for a new car.
6. The U.S. unemployment rate averaged 3.8%.
7. The average life expectancy at birth in the U.S. was 70.56 year.
8. The cost of a 30-second Super Bowl ad was \$37,500.
9. Average monthly rent was \$125.
10. Price of a Big Mac: \$0.45.

### January

Ronald Regan, past movie actor and future President of the U.S., is inaugurated the new governor of California.

Vietnam War: Operation Cedar Falls starts.

The Human Be-In takes place in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco; the event sets the stage for the "Summer of Love".

U.S. astronauts Gus Grisson, Ed White, and Roger Chaffee are killed when fire breaks out in their Apollo 1 spacecraft during a launch pad test.

The United States, Soviet Union, and United Kingdom sign the Outer Space Treaty.

### February

The 25<sup>th</sup> amendment to the U.S. Constitution (presidential succession and disability) is ratified.

New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison claims he will solve the John F. Kennedy assassination, and that a conspiracy was planned in New Orleans.

The Human Be-In #2 is held in Griffith Park, Los Angeles, CA.

### March

Joseph Stalin's daughter, Svetlana Alliluyeva, defects to the USA via the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi.

Ten thousand people gather for the Central Park Be-In.

A thirteen-day television strike begins in the U.S.

### April

Martin Luther King, Jr. denounces the Vietnam War during a religious service in New York City.

The first Boeing 737 takes its maiden flight.

In San Francisco, ten thousand people march against the Vietnam War.

In Houston, boxer Muhammad Ali refuses military service.

## May

The National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam is established.

Armed members of the Black Panther Party enter the California state capital to protest a bill that restricted the carry of arms in public.

400 students seize the administration building at Cheyney State College (now Cheyney University of Pennsylvania), the oldest institute for higher education for African-Americans.

## June

The Six-Day War: USS Liberty incident. Israeli fighter jets and Israeli warships fire at the USS Liberty off Gaza, killing 34 and wounding 171.

A four-day race riot occurs in Tampa, Florida, after the shooting death of Martin Chambers by police while allegedly robbing a camera store.

The Cold War: U.S. President Lyndon Johnson meets with Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin in Glassboro, New Jersey, for the three-day Glassboro Summit Conference.

The Buffalo Race Riot begins, lasting five days and leading to 200 arrests.

## July

The Long Hot Summer of 1967: After the arrest of an African-American cab driver for allegedly illegally driving around a police car and gunning it down the road, rioting breaks out in Newark, New Jersey, and continues for five days. Race riots also break out in Minneapolis, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Rochester.

The town of Winneconne, Wisconsin, announces secession from the United States because it is not included in the official maps and declares war. Secession is repealed the next day.

## August

Race riots spread to Washington, D.C.

The People's Republic of China announces that it has shot down U.S. planes violating its airspace.

American Nazi Party leader George Lincoln Rockwell is assassinated in Arlington, Virginia.

Thurgood Marshall is confirmed as the first African-American Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

## September

Vietnam War: The U.S. Marines launch Operation Swift, a search and destroy mission. The four-day battle in Que Son Valley kills 114 Americans and 376 North Vietnamese.

Jim Morrison and The Doors defy CBS censors on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, when Morrison sings the word "higher" from their #1 hit "Light My Fire", despite having been asked not to.

*Love Is a Many Splendored Thing* debuts on U.S. daytime television and is the first soap opera to deal with an interracial relationship. CBS censors find it too controversial and ask for it to be stopped, causing show creator Irna Phillips to quit.

## October

Thirty-nine people, including singer-activist Joan Baez, are arrested in Oakland, California, for blocking the entrance of that city's military induction center.

The musical *Hair* opens off-Broadway. It will move to Broadway the following April.

Tens of thousands of Vietnam War protesters march on the Pentagon in Washington D.C. Allen Ginsberg symbolically chants to "levitate" The Pentagon.

## November

Carl B. Stokes is elected mayor of Cleveland, Ohio, becoming the first African-American mayor of a major United States city.

Vietnam War: In a propaganda ceremony in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, three U.S. prisoners of war are released by the Viet Cong and turned over to "New Left" anti-war activist Tom Hayden.

U.S. Senator Eugene McCarthy announces his candidacy for the democratic Party presidential nomination, challenging incumbent President Lyndon B. Johnson over the Vietnam War.

## December

The U.S. Public Health Service studies potential ray leakage from color televisions.

Professor John Archibald Wheeler uses the term "black hole" for the first time.

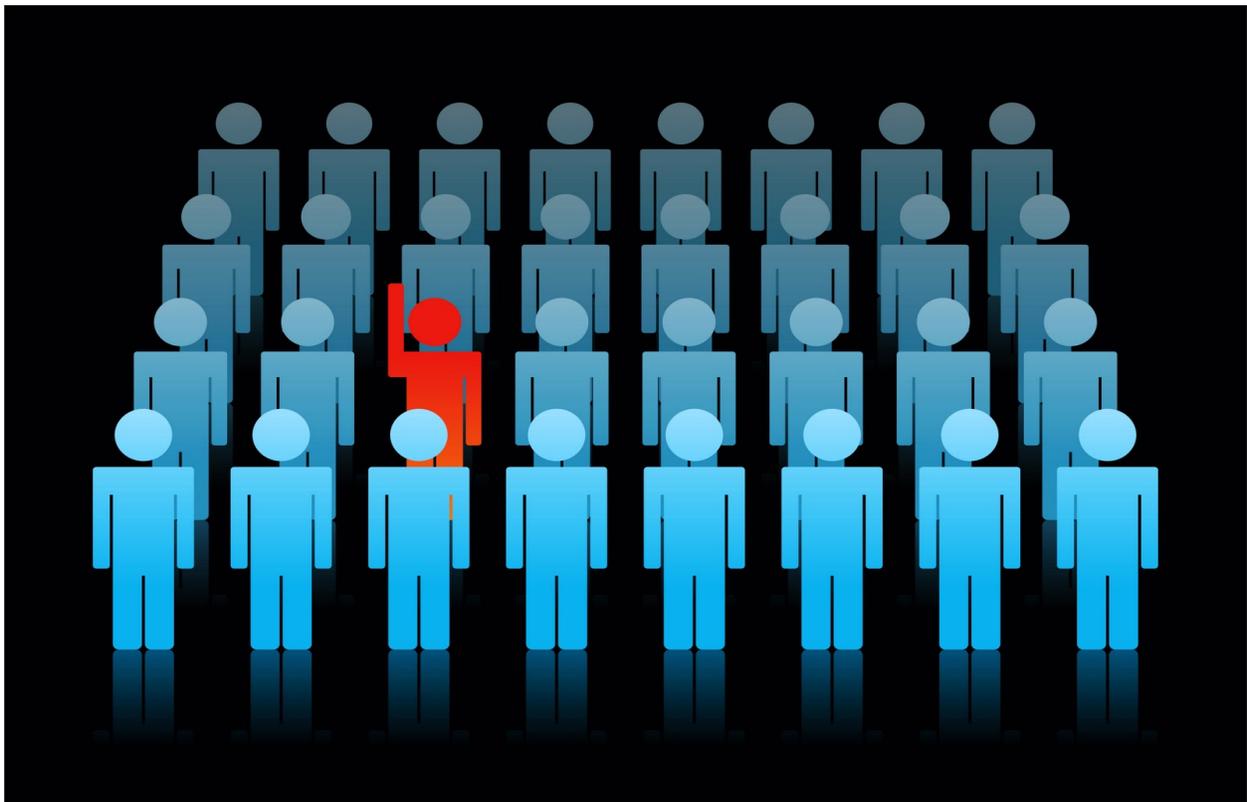
Businesswoman Muriel Siebert becomes the first woman to own a seat on the New York Stock Exchange.



WHAT IS FEAR?



**WHAT IS COURAGE?**



**CREATE YOUR OWN IDEA FOR A THEATRE PIECE CELEBRATING DIVERSITY**

Since 1993, the Core Ensemble has produced and performed new music-theatre works based on multicultural, feminist, and humanist topics.

We strive to:

1. Promote intercultural understanding.
2. Explore social justice issues through artistic interpretation.
3. Provide education programs for young people and adults;
4. Offer emotional impactful cultural experiences that spark conversation and inspire actions that make a difference in promoting equality for all.

Audience members often tell Core Ensemble artists, “I had never heard of any of these people before until I came to this show.”

So, how do we come up with the ideas for these various theatre pieces?

The process of developing each new music-theatre work in our repertoire begins with deciding on a multicultural theme or issue and then choosing real historical figures drawn from the African-American and Latinx experiences as well as the unique perspective of women whose lives exemplify their dedication to the cause.

Sometimes the theme is identified first; at other times, the individuals are selected first. In any case, a writer is then commissioned to create a script in which one actor or one actress will play all three characters. (And sometimes even more!)

Music (both existing works, as well as specially commissioned pieces) is then researched, selected, and “wed” to the finished text. Finally, in rehearsal, the actor/actress, musical trio (pianist, cellist, percussionist), and stage director collaborate in creating “the world” of the show.

At last, the piece is ready for performance. It is the interaction between the performers and audience which becomes the catalyst for opening up dialogue surrounding the stories of the very passionate men and women whose lives and work have been brought to life onstage.

ASSIGNMENT

Who are people in history whose stories may not be generally known whom you would want to see brought attention to on the stage? Why?

Could you find a common connecting thread among three or four figures which you think could form the basis for a script? (Remember, one performer must play all three or four roles.)

What would the title for this production?

To get you started, here are examples of how Core Ensemble shows have put various figures who did not even know each other into the same room together.

### **AIN'T I A WOMAN**

Sojourner Truth, ex-slave and abolitionist

Zora Neale Hurston, novelist and anthropologist

Clementine Hunter, folk artist

Fannie Lou Hamer, civil rights worker

### **LOS VALIENTES**

Diego Rivera, controversial Mexican muralist and Communist

Oscar Romero, Salvadoran archbishop assassinated over his commitment to human rights

Joaquin Murrieta (aka: Zorro), Mexican-American desperado in pursuit of social justice

### **TRES VIDAS**

Frida Kahlo, groundbreaking Mexican painter known for her self-portraits and feminism

Rufina Amaya, Salvadoran peasant activist

Alfonsina Storni, Argentinean poet

### **OF EBONY EMBERS**

This production celebrates the lives of the great African-American poets Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Claude McKay – all as seen through the eyes of the great muralist and painter Aaron Douglas.

### **UNBOUGHT**

Ida B. Wells, African-American journalist and women's suffrage activist  
Sally Hemmings, the slave with whom Thomas Jefferson fathered six children  
Shirley Chisholm, first African-American Congresswoman from New York and first  
to run for President

### **LAS MAGNIFICAS**

Chavela Vargas, iconic Mexican ranchera singer

Celia Cruz, Cuban singer ("The Queen of Salsa")

Violeta Parra, Chilean singer considered the mother of Latin American folk music

### **EQUALLY DIVINE**

This production explores the theory and possibility that the Mona Lisa painting was inspired not only by the original female model, but also by a young man, an apprentice to the artist Leonardo da Vinci – opening our minds to tolerance, gender fluidity, and celebrating men's and women's empowerment.

### **ASSIGNMENT**

*The actual process of developing a finished script comes after hours first of research. Historical accuracy is essential. However, historical accuracy can run the risk of becoming too scholarly and "historically boring"!*

*We think of each scene in these productions as an individual monologue. Through this device, the actor or actress "breaks the fourth wall" with the audience. In this way the audience becomes a bit of a confidant for the character, who tells his/her story in a very personal way – at once engaging, amusing, and vulnerable.*

*1. Which historical figures do you consider to be your own heroes? Select a single person of interest to you and write a journal or diary entry in which he/she reveals and describes a life event or circumstance.*

*2. Read and/or record this entry aloud. (Or ask someone to do so for you.) Ask yourself if it holds interest for the listener. Is it compelling? Does the listener want to hear more? Revise accordingly. Keep revising. Keep revising, and hopefully at some point it "feels" right!*

3. *Select another occurrence from the same character's life. Again, write a journal or diary entry about it in that character's "voice". Keep polishing until, again, it feels right.*

4. *Keep selecting the key moments in the character's life and work which "demand to be told" and write on them as if they "demand to be heard".*

5. *Eventually, all of this writing needs to be organized so that it flows together as one continuous piece of storytelling between the character and the audience. Figure out the best sequence for conveying all the facts of the character's life. Keep experimenting with finding the best beginning-middle-end. What/where/when is the climax of the scene?*

6. *Again, it is very useful if at some point you have someone other than yourself read the material aloud for you to hear. Invite others to listen as well. This is a process which requires give and take. And, usually a good dose of humility when someone says, "It would probably be clearer if you just cut these seven lines on page three."*

***Eventually, you will then have the first monologue for your show (titled what?).  
Now, one down: two to go! Good luck.***



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