



CIFRAS

by Mar Gómez Glez

DIRECTED BY FERNANDO OPERÉ

CIFRAS SYNOPSIS:

An example of 'Fact-Inspired Drama,' *Cifras* is based on the plight of the *Francisco y Catalina*, a Spanish fishing boat that in July of 2006 rescued fifty-one migrants (Eritreans, Moroccans, and Pakistanis) in the Mediterranean Sea, approximately one hundred miles from the coast of Malta. The majority of the migrants were men, though the group also included two pregnant women and one two-year old infant. As the boat made its way to Malta – the closest destination – the fishing vessel was stopped and refused entry to the Maltese port of Valletta. What followed was a weeklong maritime standstill as diplomatic negotiations got underway regarding possible and willing host countries for the migrants. Meanwhile, hygienic and living conditions rapidly deteriorated on board, and while the politicians negotiated the future of the migrants, the present of those aboard the boat was one of escalating human drama and tension.

Cifras opens the day after the boat (here named the *Circe*) has rescued the migrants. At the outset we are introduced to the characters of the *Cocinero*, the *Marinero*, the *Patrón*, and his wife and owner of the *Circe*, *Carmen*. Through the dialogue between the *Cocinero* and the *Marinero* we are made aware of the lack of food available for all of the migrants and crew (a total of sixty-one mouths to feed aboard a boat with space and provisions for eleven crew members). As the *Patrón* struggles to call and make contact with *Carmen* it is revealed that he deals with a parallel personal struggle. As a recovering alcoholic, the strenuous situation aboard the *Circe* will test the limits of his sobriety. Back on land, it is *Carmen* who makes the decisive move to contact the Spanish Ambassador in Malta in order to incite the respective governments into action. *Carmen* additionally uses her laptop computer to begin an online chat thread with



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the *Circe* as the primary subject of discussion and as a catalyst for a larger discussion on immigration and opinions surrounding refugees. Through the online chat, we catch a glimpse of the array of public viewpoints and sentiments – both positive and negative – that further invite the individual spectator to consider his/her own thoughts regarding this current global issue.

Appearing intermittently and in a separate onstage space are the three government officials (the *Embajadora Española*, the *Mediador de la Unión Europea*, and the *Ministro de Exteriores maltés*), whose claims to authority and formality in their 'official' negotiations are undercut by the humor and comedic elements evident in their interactions. Whether they are interrupting each other, speaking so fast that it is impossible to understand the content of their utterances, or childishly ignoring each other's opinions, these three characters expose their own hypocrisy and the performative nature of government negotiations. Their final joy and celebration (described in the stage directions as if they were a soccer team that has just won the World Cup) exposes the ways in which governments willingly accept the merits of positive outcomes, while upstaging the main actors of the drama (here exemplified by the commercial fishermen and *Carmen*), cast out of a negotiation in which they are directly implicated.

Aboard the *Circe* tensions escalate as the initial distribution of migrants includes the possibility of sending ten to Libya. Fearing for their safety and in the face of possible torture in refugee internment camps, the migrants pen a letter

expressing the dangers that await them should they be returned to Libya. The *Patrón* takes a picture of the letter which is then sent to various media outlets, provoking both public and international outrage, and serving as an affront to the countries currently in the process of negotiations. The *Circe* is forced to further retreat from the coast of Malta, and the breakdown of his relationship with his wife causes the *Patrón* to finally open and drink the bottle of vodka which had previously served as a symbolic reminder of his sobriety. Hungover the next day, a fight ensues with the *Marinero*, disgusted at the *Patrón's* lack of dignity and character in the face of difficult circumstances. As the *Cocinero* tries to separate the two, he suffers a heart attack, the result of a week of sleep deprivation and exhaustion. The final scene takes place in a hospital room in Malta where the *Cocinero* lies in bed recovering while the *Marinero* reads him a letter of thanks – the second letter penned by the migrants – for the rescue and care shown over the course of the week, and the *Patrón* stands at the window looking out at the view. The *Patrón's* final words before exiting the room and providing closure for the play – "To set sail. We have to keep fishing" – points to the fact that even though this particular event was ultimately resolved successfully, the issue of immigration and of refugees risking their lives while attempting to cross the Mediterranean is a chronic and ongoing reality.

Anthony Passero-O'Malley

REPARTO

Marinero Tony Pasero-O'Malley
Cocinera Melissa Frost
Patrón Sam Amago
Embajadora Alicia López-Operé
Carmen (esposa) Sarah Rabke
Mediador Oscar Ruiz
Ministra Jessi Marroquín
Marinero 1 Miguel Valladares
Marinero 2 Fernando Valverde
Marinero 3 Chad Freckmann
Periodista 1 Nieves García Prados
Periodista 2 Karina Baptista
Trabajador Embajada Elizabeth Dorton
Policía Chad Freckmann
Twiteros Ana Piriz, Elizabeth Dorton,
 Miguel Valladares, Fernando Valverde, Karina Baptista,
 Joanne Britland

FICHA TÉCNICA

Vestuario Paula Sprague, Esperanza Gorriz
Maquillaje Thallya Díaz
Utería Grupo, Adam Shearer
Luminotecnia Matthew Street
Sonido Adam Cohn
Escenografía Fernando Operé
Marketing Esther Poveda
Diseño póster y programa Chari Nogales
Producción Alicia López-Operé
Asistente Producción Zaida Villanueva
Dirección Fernando Operé

THIRTY NINE YEARS OF THEATER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA THE SPANISH THEATER GROUP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA WAS FOUNDED IN 1981

Since then the group has developed an annual activity aimed at producing plays written in Spanish for North American audiences.

Cifras de Mar Gómez Glez (2019)
Las putas de San Julián, by Rubén Mosquera (2018)
El Gesticulador by Rodolfo Usigli (2017)
En la ardiente oscuridad by Antonio Buero Vallejo (2016)
La Nona, by Roberto Cossa (2015)
Idiotas contemplando la nieve by Alejandro Ricano (2014)
Botánica by Dolores Prida (2013)
Entre Villa y una mujer desnuda by Sabrina Berman (2012)
Homenaje a Miguel Hernández (2011)
Decir sí; La que sigue; Oficina; and Pisar el palito
 by Griselda Gambaro (2010)
El amor del gato y el perro by Enrique Jardiel Poncela (2009)
Breve encuentro by José Luis Alonso de Santos (2009)
Resguardo personal by Paloma Pedrero (2009)
Ana en el trópico by Nito Cruz (2008)
Fuera de quicio by José Luis Alonso de Santos (2006)

Noches de amor efímero by Paloma Pedrero (2005)
Yonquis y Yanquis by José Luis Alonso de Santos (2004)
Bodas de sangre by Federico García Lorca (2003)
Retablo de la avaricia, la lujuria y la muerte
 by Ramón del Valle-Inclán (2002)
La mariposa blanca by Gabriela Roepke (2001)
El delantal blanco by Sergio Vodanovich (2001)
Bodas que fueron famosas del Pájaro y la Fandanga
 by José María Rodríguez Méndez (1999)
Benito Fernández; and Un hogar sólido by Elena Garro (1998)
Don Fausto by Pedro Orgambide (1997)
La casa de Bernarda Alba by Federico García Lorca (1996)
El cementerio de automóviles by Fernando Arrabal (1995)
Ardiente paciencia by Antonio Skármeta (1994)
Noche de guerra en el museo del Prado by Rafael Alberti (1993)
Miguel Hernández: El hombre y su poesía (1992)

El concierto de San Ovidio by Antonio Buero Vallejo (1992)
Ámbar by Hugo Hiriart (1991)
El día que soltaron los leones by Emilio Carballido (1990)
El llano en llamas by Juan Rulfo (1989)
El Filántropo by Virgilio Piñera (1988)
Chúo Gil by Arturo Uslar Pietri (1987)
Historias para ser contadas by Osvaldo Dragún (1986)
Teatro romántico by several authors (1985)
Pic-Nic; and El triciclo by Fernando Arrabal (1985)
El retablillo de Don Cristóbal; and Amor de Don Perlimplín y Belisa en su jardín by Federico García Lorca (1984)
Farsa italiana de la enamorada del rey by Ramón del Valle-Inclán (1983)
La Orgía by Enrique Buenaventura (1982)
La Guerra y el hombre by several authors (1981)

NOTAS A UN ESTRENO



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Con *Cifras* el UVA Spanish Department Theater Group asume un estreno mundial. Aunque la obra ha sido estrenada en inglés en varios países, esta puesta en escena representa una premier en español. Es un honor y una gran responsabilidad montar una obra con una carga social y política de una actualidad tan relevante. Si hay un problema fundamental al que el mundo se enfrenta en el siglo XXI, es la canalización de una emigración a muchos niveles que está teniendo lugar en prácticamente todos los continentes, en distintos frentes y direcciones. Este no es un problema exclusivo de la frontera con México sobre el que los medios y los políticos nos ponen en guardia, sino que afecta a numerosos países con una incidencia incluso mayor, especialmente en el Mediterráneo, donde la autora ubica su drama. De acuerdo al Informe Internacional sobre Migraciones de 2017 de la ONU, el número de migrantes en el mundo se incrementó en un 49 por ciento desde el 2000 alcanzando los 258 millones de personas. Las principales razones son la pobreza, la falta de recursos y las amenazas de violencia en los países de origen. Mar Gómez Glez ha asumido el reto de escenificar este drama humano de enormes proporciones. Nos unimos a esta llamada de atención y lo hacemos asumiendo los riesgos. No es tarea fácil, aunque el texto de Gómez Glez está muy bien construido, y es de una gran modernidad escénica. Con *Cifras* el grupo celebra 39 años de actividad teatral en la Universidad de Virginia.

Fernando Operé



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