

BRAINPEOPLE

José Rivera

BROADWAY PLAY PUBLISHING INC

150 W 4th St, NY NY 10014 (212) 772-8334

212 772-8334 fax: 212 772-8358

BroadwayPlayPubl.com

BRAINPEOPLE

© Copyright 2008 by José Rivera

All rights reserved. This work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. No part of this publication may be photocopied, reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher. Additional copies of this play are available from the publisher.

Written permission is required for live performance of any sort. This includes readings, cuttings, scenes, and excerpts. For amateur and stock performances, please contact Broadway Play Publishing Inc. For all other rights contact John Buzzetti, The Gersh Agency, 41 Madison Ave, 33rd fl, NY NY 10010.

First printing: December 2008

Second printing: June 2009

I S B N: 978-0-88145-393-5

Book design: Marie Donovan

Word processing: Microsoft Word

Typographic controls: Ventura Publisher

Typeface: Palatino

Printed and bound in the U S A

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

José Rivera is a recipient of two OBIE Awards for Playwriting (for *MARISOL* and *REFERENCES TO SALVADOR DALI MAKE ME HOT*, both at The Joseph Papp Public Theater), a Fulbright Arts Fellowship, a Whiting Foundation Award, a McKnight Fellowship, and a 2005 Impact Award. He studied with Gabriel García Márquez at Sundance and was writer-in-residence at the Royal Court Theater, London.

U S theater productions include *THE HOUSE OF RAMON IGLESIA* (Ensemble Studio Theater, American Playhouse), *MARISOL* (Humana Festival, La Jolla Playhouse, Hartford Stage Co), *CLOUD TECTONICS* (Humana Festival, Playwrights Horizons, Goodman Theater), *REFERENCES TO SALVADOR DALI MAKE ME HOT* (South Coast Rep), *EACH DAY DIES WITH SLEEP* (Circle Rep, Berkeley Rep), *SONNETS FOR AN OLD CENTURY* (Greenway Arts Alliance), *SUEÑO* (Hartford Stage, Manhattan Class Company, Milwaukee Rep), *GIANTS HAVE US IN THEIR BOOKS* (Magic Theater, INTAR Theater), *MARICELA DE LA LUZ LIGHTS THE WORLD* (La Jolla Playhouse), *THE PROMISE* (Ensemble Studio Theater, Los Angeles Theater Center), *THE STREET OF THE SUN* (Mark Taper Forum), *ADORATION OF THE OLD WOMAN* (La Jolla Playhouse), *SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS* (Joseph Papp Public Theater and LAByrinth Theater), and *MASSACRE (SING TO YOUR CHILDREN)* (Goodman Theater and Teatro Vista).

BRAINPEOPLE (A C T, San Francisco). BOLEROS FOR THE DISENCHANTED (Yale Rep) and YELLOW (Collaboraction). His work has been seen in Puerto Rico, London, Paris, Edinburgh, Mexico City, Singapore, Greece, Sweden, Norway, Canada, Peru, Australia, Germany, Romania, and the Philippines.

The screenplay for his first produced film *The Motorcycle Diaries* (Walter Salles, director) was nominated for a 2005 Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay, a BAFTA Award, and a Writers Guild Award, and received Spain's Goya Award for Best Adapted Screenplay as well as Argentina's top screenwriting award. For television he co-created and produced the series *Eerie, Indiana* (N B C). In 2006 he wrote and directed the short film *The Tape Recorder* (with Sona Tatoyan). His film *Trade* (Lionsgate Pictures, with Kevin Kline) premiered at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival and was the first film to premiere at the United Nations. He has written screen adaptations of Kerouac's *On The Road* (Francis Ford Coppola, producer, Walter Salles, director), and the novel *Three Apples Fell From Heaven* (Door/Key Productions). *Celestina*, a film based on CLOUD TECTONICS, will mark his debut as a feature film director.

Rivera serves on the board of PEN West, is a member of The LAByrinth Theater Company, and is a founding member of The Fire Department.

BRAINPEOPLE was commissioned by South Coast Repertory Theater, Martin Benson and David Emmes, Artistic Directors.

BRAINPEOPLE received its world premiere at the American Conservatory Theater, San Francisco (Carey Perloff, artistic director, Heather Kitchen, executive director), on 2 February 2008. The cast and creative contributors were as follows:

MAYANNAH Lucia Brawley
ANI Sona Tatoyan
ROSEMARY Rene Augesen
Director Chay Yew
Scenic designer Daniel Ostling
Costume designer Lydia Tanji
Lighting designer Paul Whitaker
Sound designer Cliff Caruthers
Casting directors .. Greg Hubbard & Meryl Lind Shaw
Dramaturg Michael Paller
Stage manager June Palladino
Production assistant Laura Osborn
Assistant to the Director Bruce Coughran

BRAINPEOPLE was made possible by the generous support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for New Works, an endowment fund of The Next Generation Campaign.

Special thanks to Erica Gould, Rebecca Wisocky, Mozhan Marno, Jessica Boucher, Jennifer Blevins, Robert Clyde, Avery Clyde, the Mark Taper Forum Mentor Playwrights, Lisa Peterson, Marissa Chibas, Svetlana Efremova, Jessica Hecht, Jacqueline Kim, Ana Ortiz, Michi Barrall, Juliette Carrillo, Sandra Oh, Morgan Jenness, Len Berkman, Jerry Patch, The Black Dahlia Theatre, Scott Horstein, Nick Mangano, The Garson Theatre, Madeline Brown, Lindsey Marlin, Desi Moreno-Penson, Zenda Tatoyan, Hartford Stage Company, Playwrights Horizons, Tim Sanford, Jeremy Cohen, Lisa Timmel, The Joseph Papp Public Theatre, Johanna Pfaelzer, Karina Arroyave, Zabrina Guevara, Camilia Sanes, Alyssa Bresnahan, Primary Stages, David Lee Strasberg, Carlos San Miguel, Juan Carlos Malpeli, Benoit Beauchamp, Sidney Miller, Vahe Berberian, Lyon Forrest Hill, Jennifer Mae Stevens, Karin Tatoyan, Javi Mulero, Lina Patel, Ariane N Picari, Leah Roy, and Cindy Gendrich.

CHARACTERS & SETTING

MAYANNAH
ROSEMARY
ANI

MAYANNAH's apartment, Los Angeles

Time: the present.

There is no intermission.

When you sleep in the exile's bed linen or drink from
his cup do you know his body or his name? Is there no
shame in owning our things?

Three Apples Fell from Heaven, Micheline Aharonian
Marcom

I felt a Cleaving in my Mind—
As if my Brain has split—
I tried to match it— Seam by Seam—
But could not make them fit.

The thought behind I strove to join
Unto the thought before—
But sequence raveled out of Sound
Like Balls—upon a Floor.

Emily Dickinson

A tiger comes to mind. The twilight here
Exalts the vast and busy Library
And seems to set the bookshelves back in gloom;
Innocent, ruthless, bloodstained, sleek
It wanders through its forest and its day
Printing a track along the muddy banks
Of sluggish streams whose names it does not know
(In its world there are no names or past
Or time to come, only the vivid now)
And makes its way across wild distances
Sniffing the braided labyrinths of smells
And in the wind picking the smell of dawn
And tantalizing scent of grazing deer;
Among the bamboo's slanting stripes I glimpse
The tiger's stripes and sense the bony frame
Under the splendid, quivering cover of skin.
Curving the oceans and the planet's wastes keep us
Apart in vain; from here in a house fall off
In South America I dream of you,
Track you, O tiger of the Ganges' banks.

Jorge Luis Borges

for Sona

(Light reveals a long, empty table covered in a colorful tablecloth decorated with images of the Taino Indians of Puerto Rico.)

(Upstage of the table is a wet bar and an antique built-in hutch.)

(Lights reveal ROSEMARY.)

(She is early thirties, slight, working-class, pretty but hungry and worn down by life. Her clothes, shoes and costume jewelry were bought at the Salvation Army. Her over-done make-up is a little trashy.)

(ROSEMARY has multiple personalities. Right now she's ROSETTA, a Midwestern gal with a flat American accent.)

ROSEMARY/ROSETTA: *(To off stage person)* Goodness me, I haven't had meat in so long. I forgot how much I loved the smell.

(Expanding light reveals we're in a once-luxurious penthouse apartment in downtown Los Angeles.)

(Seen through big windows, a red sun sets, forcing the sky into strange, startling colors.)

(As time passes, sparkling city lights appear—until the view outside feels like an urban dreamscape as removed from crime, fear, distress as possible.)

(There's exposed brick; morbid/erotic artwork and folkloric, graphic crucifixes on the walls; old books, faded furniture, a once-fancy fireplace with missing tiles; very distressed wooden floor.)

(Everything was once brightly colored, vibrant, now muted and decayed.)

(It's as if the room were stuck in time.)

(MAYANNAH enters from the kitchen holding a fancy butter dish.)

(She is early thirties, with long dark hair, dark, intense eyes; her clothes are elegant and black; she wears diamond necklaces, earrings, and bracelets.)

(Her sad, lovely, aristocratic Puerto Rican face is heart-shaped.)

MAYANNAH: This butter was made from the milk of cows in my parents' hometown in Puerto Rico.

ROSEMARY/ROSETTA: Red meat, blood, and butter!
Wow!

MAYANNAH: Every year I get it flown from the island on a private jet just for this meal.

ROSEMARY/ROSETTA: That's fancy for you. You sure go all out.

MAYANNAH: My dear Rosemary: you guys are going to have the meal of your *lives* tonight.

ROSEMARY/ROSETTA: No, please, don't call me that. My name isn't Rosemary. It's Rosetta.

MAYANNAH: Oh, I thought, when we met, you said it was Rosemary.

ROSEMARY/ROSETTA: Oh no, Rosemary was not invited tonight. I'm sorry. Let's move on to another topic.

MAYANNAH: She wasn't invi—?

ROSEMARY/ROSETTA: Oh—I love that necklace you're wearing. So glittery.

MAYANNAH: Yes, my, my mother left it to me...

ROSEMARY/ROSETTA: And it's so great, this *place*,
Mayannah. There's nothing like it back where I'm
from—Cincinnati. It's like a big, old, crazy church.
All the pretty Jesuses!

MAYANNAH: I collect them.

ROSEMARY/ROSETTA: —Why are they all naked?

(The doorbell rings.)

MAYANNAH: Ay! The other one. I thought she'd never
show. Excuse me, Ro—

ROSEMARY/ROSETTA: —setta!

*(MAYANNAH hurries offstage. We hear the sound of a door
opening.)*

*(Now that she's alone, ROSEMARY/ROSETTA can't help but
stare at the butter on the table.)*

ANI: *(Off)* Mayannah? Hi, oh my God, I can't believe
I got here in one piece.

MAYANNAH: *(Off)* But don't you look hot tonight.

ANI: *(Off)* Yeah, last time you saw me, I looked like
death.

*(ROSEMARY/ROSETTA puts her finger in the butter and
she tastes it. It's delicious.)*

ROSEMARY/ROSETTA: Oh God, kill me now...!

*(The ecstasy of the taste makes ROSEMARY/ROSETTA
change personalities, becoming ROSEMARY/ROSIE, who
is high-strung, pushy, nervous, and speaks with an ersatz
Liverpool accent.)*

*(When ROSEMARY changes personalities, everything about
her can alter: her race, accent, IQ, body language, gender,
and emotional make-up.)*

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: Come on, now, let someone else
have a piece of that!

(ROSEMARY/ROSIE *hungrily drinks the butter, then licks the dish.*)

ANI: (*Off, entering, agitated*) They put up these new checkpoints on the 10 and the soldiers are really gross.

MAYANNAH: (*Off, entering*) Well, you're here with friends now and everything's going to be magic.

(MAYANNAH *leads ANI, late twenties, into the room.*)

(ANI *is a brilliant, beautiful, obsessive, lovelorn Armenian woman with nearly unnaturally white skin, piercing eyes beneath glasses. Hair in a ponytail.*)

(*Though articulate and well-dressed there's something awkward about her: she has a hard time navigating real and emotional space.*)

ANI: They get the dumbest, most neo-lithic men in America for those jobs. I almost told your driver to turn around and take me home.

MAYANNAH: I'm glad you didn't...I would've cried for a *month*.

ANI: Why?

MAYANNAH: Ani—come meet Rosemary—*Rosetta*. Rosemary wasn't invited, I just found out.

(MAYANNAH *leads ANI to ROSEMARY/ROSIE.*)

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: No, no, God, no, it's not *Rosetta*—it's Rosie.

MAYANNAH: (*Confused by the new accent*) Oh, I meant—Rosie...

(*The two guests regard each other a little warily.*)

ANI: Hi, I'm Ani. Great to meet you, Rosie.

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: Yeah, okay.

(ANI *and ROSEMARY/ROSIE lamely shake hands.*)

ANI: (*Flustered*) Those *checkpoints*, right? They ask so many questions...and it's like you never have enough I D or bribe money to make them happy.

(MAYANNAH *looks admiringly at her two guests.*)

MAYANNAH: Oh, you two: lovely eyes, lovely hands... and we're all really *here*—in my house—the three of us.

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: Three! Oh, brother!

MAYANNAH: So this is the part where I officially thank you guys for braving the crazy streets and coming all the way here to be with me tonight.

ANI: Well, thanks for having us.

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: That goes double for me!

MAYANNAH: The rule is, whatever happens on the street tonight, it doesn't touch us. Up here we will have as much fun and be as happy as we can.

ANI: Oh—no pressure, though.

MAYANNAH: I have a feeling...you two are going to be the best guests I ever had.

ANI: So all we have to do is...eat, right?

(MAYANNAH *goes to the hutch and takes out three antique-looking plates and puts them on the table.*)

MAYANNAH: Yeah and at the end of dinner...there'll be a little "monetary reward," like we talked about...then everyone goes home...easy, right?

ANI: Cash, check, or wire transfer?

MAYANNAH: Any way you want it, Ani.

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: (*Excited*) Would it be kosher to get my twenty Gs in crisp, new *five-dollar bills*?

MAYANNAH: If you guys make it to the end of dessert, you might get the keys to the whole, friggin' house!

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: Awesome!

MAYANNAH: Okay, now, *perdonáme*—there's a lot to do. And I do it all myself. That's my rule.

ANI: Why wouldn't we make it to the end of dessert?

(Without answering, MAYANNAH goes briskly off to the kitchen.)

(ANI and ROSEMARY/ROSIE regard each other awkwardly.)

(ANI takes in ROSEMARY/ROSIE's shabby clothes—her gaze is intense and makes ROSEMARY/ROSIE uncomfortable.)

Are those shoes really back in style?

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: I'm a rock musician, dear. I *am* style.

ANI: If you say so. *(She looks around, checking out the books, the paintings, the distressed furniture, as if she's looking for something.)* This place is basically creepy and she's like a little weird.

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: You looking for something?

ANI: Bugs.

(MAYANNAH appears with several platters full of tostones, which she puts on the table.)

ANI: So! I, I changed clothes like eighteen times before I could figure out what to wear. It's been forever since I got asked out. Didn't know people still *did* that. Have dinner parties.

MAYANNAH: Because people are too afraid.

(ROSEMARY/ROSIE is drawn to the food like the starving person she is.)

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: Well, sure, all the curfews and tanks and—that looks *yummy*.

MAYANNAH: People were afraid before the curfews. Let's face it, people *terrify*. *La Doña* always tells me:

nothing on earth can scare you like another human being.

(MAYANNAH goes off to the kitchen.)

ANI: (*Calling off to MAYANNAH*) Thought I was the only one who thinks depressing shit like that.

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: You must think you're pretty special, then.

ANI: No, it's just—people mess me up. You can't trust what they do or say. Like everyone around here is speaking their own language.

(MAYANNAH appears with a large steaming platter of rice and beans. She puts it on the table.)

(*During the following, she puts out serving spoons, long knives, cleavers, long forks, skewers, and corkscrews from the hutch.*)

MAYANNAH: That's not going to happen tonight. Not here.

ANI: But isn't that how we *are*? Always hiding from each other—so we never know what's really going on?

(ROSEMARY/ROSIE can't take her eyes off the food.)

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: When do we stop yakking and start eating?

MAYANNAH: (*To ROSEMARY/ROSIE*) Soon, *mi amor*, soon.

ANI: It's like we're these geniuses at keeping the really good stuff we have—the way-too-easy-to-break stuff—buried so deep, no one can *touch* it. It makes me feel like a friggin' archeologist half the time, always digging under the skin of people, hoping, you know, for *answers*, some clarity, an actual, real look at a person's, you know—soul.

MAYANNAH: An archeologist of personalities.

ANI: Right? It's like a defense thing I have. So I don't get tricked or smashed or fucked, the way I look at people.

MAYANNAH: I noticed that about you. You keep staring at me and, uh, Rosie—

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: (*To ANI*) I'm sorry, but it gives me the heebies, all your staring, all your eyeballs googling at me.

ANI: It's not staring. It's analyzing, like an X-ray.

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: (*Pronouncing it "Annie"*) "Ani", is it?

ANI: (*Correcting her*) Ani...

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: Let me just say, Auuhhni, that maybe you shouldn't dig too deep. Could hurt somebody. Or scare yourself to death.

ANI: Good! It's called self-examination?

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: Well, I don't want anyone exploring me. Cracking my head open to look inside.

MAYANNAH: (*To ROSEMARY/ROSIE*) You won't look her in the eye. I noticed that about you.

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: (*Aggressive*) Or listen to the words in my head. Some nights it's like the bloody B B C in there! Okay?!

ANI: Hey, back off a little!

MAYANNAH: There's some tension between you two and that's not cool tonight. That's not what I'm paying for.

ANI: All I'm *saying*, okay, someone tells you to choose between being Socrates *unsatisfied*, or a pig *satisfied*. Obvious answer: Socrates.

ROSEMARY/ROSIE (*Very hungry*) Because pigs end up on a *plate*, right Mayannah?

MAYANNAH: We're not having pig tonight. Actually, what we're eating is as far from pig as you can get.
(She goes off to the kitchen.)

ANI: Excuse me? What's she serving us?

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: *(Calling off to MAYANNAH)* So, Mayannah...I have to ask: how rich are you, anyway?

ANI: *(Sotto to ROSEMARY/ROSIE)* Look, if she's serving us *people*...not staying.

MAYANNAH: *(Off, bored)* A lot fucking rich.

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: *(Calling off to MAYANNAH)* I never met a rich Puerto Rican before. I thought you were from Argentina.

MAYANNAH: *(Off)* I don't like to think about the money.

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: *(Calling off to MAYANNAH)* If it was mine? I wouldn't think of anything else. It would be the air in my lungs and the man in my bed.

MAYANNAH: *(Off)* Sometimes I think I should be living on the street...wallowing in filth...but my poor parents would not have wanted that for me...

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: *(Calling off to MAYANNAH)* Are they dead?

(MAYANNAH enters, with a huge steaming platter of meat covered in bright-red juices: organs, glands, legs, claws, muscles: bloody. She sets it on the table.)

MAYANNAH: Dead as the meat on our table.

(ANI and ROSEMARY/ROSIE look at the platter of unusual viscera on the table. It doesn't look like any kind of meat they've ever had.)

ANI: Tell me it's not a person, okay?

MAYANNAH: *(Laughs)* You're too cute, Ani! A *person*!

ROSEMARY/ROSIE: I've never smelled anything like it.
It has a hypnotic kinda scent.

(MAYANNAH takes in the table full of sumptuous food.)

MAYANNAH: Well, this is it, girls, tonight's meal.
(Pleased, relieved this night has finally come.) My parents
bought these plates the first week they were married.
The *tostones* and the *arroz con gandules* are the way we
made them for generations. And the meat...very special.
Special for tonight. For my two special guests. *(She goes
to the bar and pours out three shots of rum.)* And get ready
to taste the best Puerto Rican rum, ever. It's my family's
label and it's a ticket to heaven. Come, a toast is good
luck. *(She hands out the shots and raises her glass, excited.)*
Salud, dinero, y amor!

(ANI and ROSEMARY/ROSIE raise their glasses.)

ANI & ROSEMARY/ROSIE: *(With less enthusiasm)*
Genatzet./Cheers.

(They drink the very strong rum.)