

LA MALINCHE OPERA [Work in Progress 4-29-22]

by Nathan Felix

Characters

La Malinche

Hernan Cortes

Aztec Slave 1

Aztec Slave 2

Synopsis: *La Malinche* is a one act chamber opera by composer Nathan Felix that will premiere at the Albuquerque Museum in July 2022. The opera explores themes that La Malinche was both reviled as a traitor and hailed as the mother of Mexico. An enslaved Indigenous girl who became Hernán Cortés' interpreter and cultural translator, Malinche stood center stage in one of the most significant events of modern history. She was linguistically gifted and played a key role in the transactions, negotiations, and conflicts between the Spanish and the Indigenous populations of Mexico that impacted the course of global politics for centuries to come. Significantly, as mother to Cortés' first-born son she became the symbolic progenitor of a modern Mexican nation, built on both Indigenous and Spanish heritage.

ACT 1: La Malinche - Traitor or Savior?

- i. El Mestizo
- ii. Trail of God
- iii. Destruction
- iv. Surrendered Love
- v. New Spain

[i. El Mestizo]

(Malinche is in the center of the stage with her eyes closed and her head down. The other slaves are surrounding her on their knees working (scrubbing the floor & tending to Cortes). She looks both right and left. To the right is the future. To the left is the past. She pleads to the crowd through her aria that she had no choice but to enact Cortes's wishes. She acts as a narrator in this opening scene trying to convince us as well as the other slaves that she is not a traitor.)

MALINCHE (*stoic*)

I was 10 years old

Tenía diez años

When I was sold into slavery

Cuando fui vendida como esclavo

When I lived in Potonchán

Cuando vivía en Potonchán

I learned the Chontal Maya language

Aprendí el idioma Maya Chontal

I was sold as a slave

Fui vendida como esclavo

To Hernan Cortes

A Hernán Cortés

He promised me more than freedom

Me prometió más que la libertad

(The slaves rise and circle and point at Malinche)

SLAVES

Libertad

Triadora

MALINCHE (*pleading*)

Why am I seen as a traitor

¿Por qué soy vista como traidora?

(The slaves abandon La Malinche one at a time as she pleads with them. Cortes boastfully turns towards the slaves as he mocks the slaves. He grabs La Malinche)

HERNAN CORTES (*brashfully*)

Marina is a traitor in the eyes of her people

Ante los ojos de su gente, Marina es una traidora

But I tell her in private

Pero a solas le digo

(slaves tussle with Cortes for La Malinche)

SLAVES

Doña Marina

(Cortes allows the slaves to take Malinche as he looks towards Tenochtitlan. Malinche falls to her knees)

HERNAN CORTES

Do not fear

Que no tenga miedo

History will be on her side

La historia estará de su lado

(The slaves try console Malinche)

SLAVES

We lost our land

Perdimos nuestra tierra

(Malinche on her knees and pleads towards the sky)

MALINCHE (*Despair*)

I did not choose to die

No escogí la muerte

I chose to sacrifice

Escogí el sacrificio

I became Doña Marina

Me convertí en Doña Marina

(Malinche rises and feels empowered and demonstratively directs the slaves to rise)

Who would know? (Who would have guessed?)

Quién iba a saber? (Quién lo hubiera dicho?)

For all my good deeds

Que por todas mis bondades

I would scar my family

Dejaría mi familia marcada

(They embrace La Malinche and circle her and her hand is on their stomachs symbolizing Martin's birth.)

SLAVES

Survive

Sobrevive

El Mestizo

(El) Mestizo)

MALINCHE *(confidently)*

El Mestizo

(El) Mestizo)

The new world was our destiny

El nuevo mundo era nuestro destino

My son Martin is my legacy

Mi hijo Martín es mi legado

(Cortes struts amongst the slaves boasting about his conquest)

HERNAN CORTES

But it will be my children that will one day rule this land

Pero serán mis hijos quienes un día gobernarán esta tierra

(Cortes leads them on towards Tenochtitlan)

SLAVES

Survive

Sobrevive

El Mestizo

(El) Mestizo)

MALINCHE *(shamefully)*

I was Aztec

Yo era una Azteca

HERNAN CORTES

You are Aztec

Tu eres una Azteca

I am a slave now

Ahora soy un esclavo

In rich clothing

En ropas finas

Forgive me

Perdóname

(Malinche drops to her knees)

(Cortes kneels and takes off his hat as he gazes in the distance at Tenochtitlan as his army disrupts the city. The slaves & Malinche point in disgust as Tenochtitlan is invaded)

[ii. Trail of God]

SLAVES

Survive

Sobrevive

Do not resist

No resistas

(Slaves and Malinche fall to the ground and cover their eyes from the light coming from the blazing fires upon Tenochtitlan)

SLAVES & LA MALINCHE

Liberate

SLAVES

Do not resist

No resistas

(Slaves go in hiding and scheme a plan to escape)

SLAVE 2

It is useless in the long run

Al final es inútil

To stand against Spanish weapons and Spanish ships

Resistir contra arma españolas y barcos españoles

SLAVE 1

You are monsters

Son monstruos

I am a monster

Soy una monstruo

We are monsters

Somos monstruos

(Slaves contemplate if they want to stay with Malinche as they consider her acts against the Aztecs)

SLAVE 1 & 2 (cunning)

La Doña Marina

Doña Marina

Second only to God?

Sólamente superada por Dios

MALINCHE (brashfully)

I am saving my people

Estoy salvando a mi gente

Through Christ

Por medio de Cristo

Cortes is driven by power

Cortés es impulsado por el poder

He shows no mercy

No tiene bondad

SLAVES 1 & 2 (questioning)

You live under the veil of God

Vives bajo el velo de Dios

But you act like a god

Pero actúas como un Dios

Do you have to destroy our cities?

¿Tienes que destruir nuestras ciudades?

HERNAN CORTES (triumphantly)

I claim the Spanish crown

Reclamo la corona española

On this country

Sobre esta tierra

Where will you go in defeat?

¿Dónde irás derrotado?

This is your new beginning

Éste es tu nuevo comienzo

(Slaves and Malinche fall to the ground and cover their eyes from the light coming from the blazing fires upon Tenochtitlan)

SLAVES

LIBERATE

HERNAN CORTES (*emphaticatly*)

Follow the ways of Christ

Sigue el camino de Cristo

Do not resist

No resistas

SLAVES

Do not resist

No resistas

Do not resist

No resista

HERNAN CORTES (*cunning & heated*)

Doña Marina

Doña Marina

Disguise our intentions

Ocultá nuestra intenciones

Place a veil over the eyes of Montezuma

Pon un velo sobre los ojos de Montezuma

Our future is Mexico City

Nuestro futuro es la Ciudad de México

(Slaves and Malinche fall to the ground and cover their eyes from the light coming from the blazing fires upon Tenochtitlan)

SLAVES

Liberate

HERNAN CORTES

This is not a dream

Este no es un sueño

This is our destiny

Este es nuestro destino

SLAVES

Do not resist

No resistas

This is our Trail of God

Esta es nuestra Senda de Dios

Survive

Sobrevive

Survive

Sobrevive

Why must you leave a trail of death XXXXXXXXXX

Por qué debes dejar una senda de muerte

You are a savage

Eres un salvaje

HERNAN CORTES

It does not matter what you are

No importa quien eres

You know in your heart

Sabes en tu corazón

What you have become

Lo que te has convertido

Look where you are

Mira dónde estás

Look where you were

Mira dónde estabas

MALINCHE

Why am I seen as a traitor

¿Por qué soy vista como traidora?

I had little choice

Tuve poca opción

Be proud

Siéntate orgulloso

El Mestizo

(El) Mestizo)

(La Malinche holds her stomach again implying a new ethnicity. Now everyone reaches towards her stomach)

ALL

El Mestizo

(The slaves bow to La Malinche in hopes that her new spawn will survive and give meaning to the strife put upon the Aztec Nation.)

MALINCHE & SLAVES

Survive

Sobrevive

[iii. Destruction]

(The Slaves are alone in darkness sifting through the ashes at Tenochtitlan. They feel hopeless but determined to help anyone still alive.)

SLAVE 2

You invade

tú invades

You don't explore

No exploras

You lie

Tu mientas

SLAVE 1

Montezuma is dead

Montezuma está muerto

SLAVE 2

You kill for greed

tu matas por codicia

You kill for pleasure

Tu matas por placer

SLAVE 1

We must leave

debemos irnos

Before it crashes

Antes de que se estrelle

Like waves

Como olas

SLAVES

Forgotten

Olvidado

(Cortes has his only moment where he shows his vulnerable side as he contemplates for a moment the destruction he has left behind.)

HERNAN CORTES

The leaves are changing colors

Las hojas cambian de color

And I'm changing inside

Y yo estoy cambiando por dentro

Invades my heart

Invade mi corazón

Why does this hurt?

¿Por qué duele esto?

To leave everything behind

Dejar todo atrás

(Cortes sings in English breaking the 5th wall and foreshadowing a new future.)

Do not believe what I say

But believe what my eyes speak

[iv: Surrendered Love]

(The slaves now approaches Cortes in his moment of contemplation as he sifts through the rubble asking him why he sees them as less than human.)

SLAVES

I am your stranger

Soy tu forastero

Our skin feels the same

Nuestra piel se siente igual.

We are made of the same clothes

Estamos hechos de la misma ropa.

They why am I different in your eyes

¿Por qué soy diferente a tus ojos?

Why

Por qué

I am not a stranger

Yo no soy un extraño

God made me

Dios me hizo

God made you

Dios te hizo

I am here for a reason

Estoy aquí por una razón

A reason I am uncertain of

Una razón incierta aun

A reason I have to live with

Una razón por la que tengo que vivir

As your stranger

Como tu extraño

(Cortes kneels. Malinche circles him and now approaches him with love)

MALINCHE *(tender)*

When we are alone

Cuando estamos solos

Your armor is off

Sin tus armaduras

Do you see me

¿Me ves?

You are naked

Estás desnudo

(Cortes and Malinche reach towards each other .)

MALINCHE & CORTES

Mi Amor

(They continue to circle closer towards each other and embrace.)

MALINCHE *(pleading)*

I want to believe this can be love

Quiero creer que esto puede ser amor

I want to be more than a mistress

Quiero ser más que una amante

CORTES *(scoffs)*

Do you need me to tell you the depths of my heart?

¿Te tengo que contar lo más profundo de mi corazón?

(Cortes pauses. He turns his back to La Malinche)

CORTES & MALINCHE

Sabes en tu corazón

What you have become

Lo que te has convertido

(Malinche grabs Cortes from behind and they embrace and dance)

MALINCHE

I know in my heart

Yo sé en mi corazón

That I cannot deny

Que no puedo negar

What is inevitable

Lo que es inevitable

CORTES

Then you are a wise woman

Entonces eres una mujer sabia

To listen to your heart

Si sabes escuchar tu corazón

(They stop dancing. Cortes bows and walks away. Malinche feels reassured.)

MALINCHE

I listen

Sí escucho

But I do not always trust

Pero no siempre confío

Only God knows my heart

Solo Dios conoce mi corazón

[v. New Spain]

(The slaves again go back to scrubbing the floor. Malinche now a prominent figure for all her compliance and good deeds seeks to find the silver lining for the Aztecs sacrifice.)

SLAVES

Why does this hurt?

¿Por qué duele esto?

To leave everything behind

Dejar todo atrás

But please remember

Pero por favor sigue recordando

To keep holding on

Para seguir aferrados

Don't ever let go

No me sueltes

(Everyone comes together realizing what they sacrificed, their future generations will benefit from.)

MALINCHE (*passionately*)

Oh the sun rises
Our children sleep
They dream because we gave them new life
It's all our destiny

CORTES

It's all your destiny

MALINCHE (*passionately*)

Oh the sun sets
We rise
We take what belongs to us
And we'll fight

SLAVE 1

Fight!
Yes we'll fight
And when our God looks down at the world
I hope he shows us mercy
For all those we killed

MALINCHE

It's all our destiny

CORTES

Here my family reigns
All you are and all you were will change
Follow my command and you will reign
Our New Spain
In the future they will praise my name

SLAVES

We will reign
We will change
Our New Spain

SLAVE 1

In the future they will see the truth

CORTES

It is better to die with honor
Than to live with dishonor

MALINCHE

I am just a woman who is voiceless

MALINCHE & SLAVES

In our land we feel foreign

Once again we feel we don't belong

MALINCHE

A newcomer and an outsider

ALL (as Chorus)

La Malinche (x3)

MALINCHE & SLAVES

Once again we feel we don't belong

Once again we feel we don't belong

MALINCHE

Goodbye Aztec Nation