

TEATRO  VISIÓN

# Poems of *La Muerte Baila*



9 collaborative poems  
by Yosimar Reyes  
with Teatro Visión  
and the 418 community members  
who responded to our poetry prompts

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photos by Rose Henderson



# Ancestors Speak: A Collective Poem

I'm here in spirit  
Todo lo que hice lo hice para ti  
Know that I never truly left  
if at any point in your life you miss me just remember  
the great times we had together  
Si me extrañas yo estoy ahí  
en tu corazón

When you call upon my name remember  
I was funny, caring and energetic  
Yo quiero que mi legado sea mi arte  
y que pongan chocolates en la mesa de  
mis recuerdos  
I want my legacy to be for you to continue  
discovering new things  
write the songs I left unwritten  
finish what I started  
we do this  
for the future of our kids

I will be by your shoulder  
When the wind is blowing it means I am hugging you  
I will protect you  
In the event that you ever miss my presence  
just know that I believe in you

We are all future ancestors  
and when we meet again  
we will laugh  
a huge roar  
like thunder

# Celebration

I want my funeral to be a party  
a celebration of life  
with all the people who loved me

I give you permission to get drunk in my honor  
pass out on floor  
with a tequila bottle

Dance till your clothes are sticky  
fill your belly with good food  
because you miss me

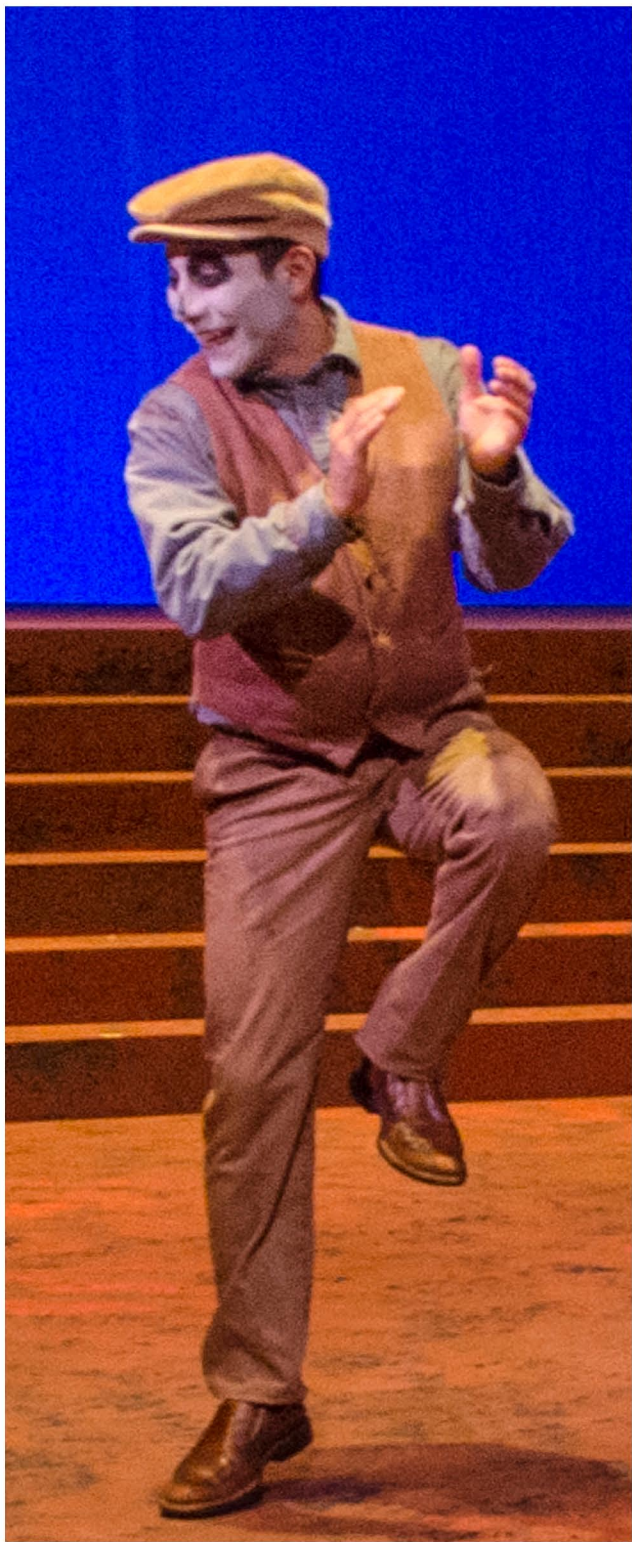
I want to be sitting in the corner of the room  
like a spider  
watching

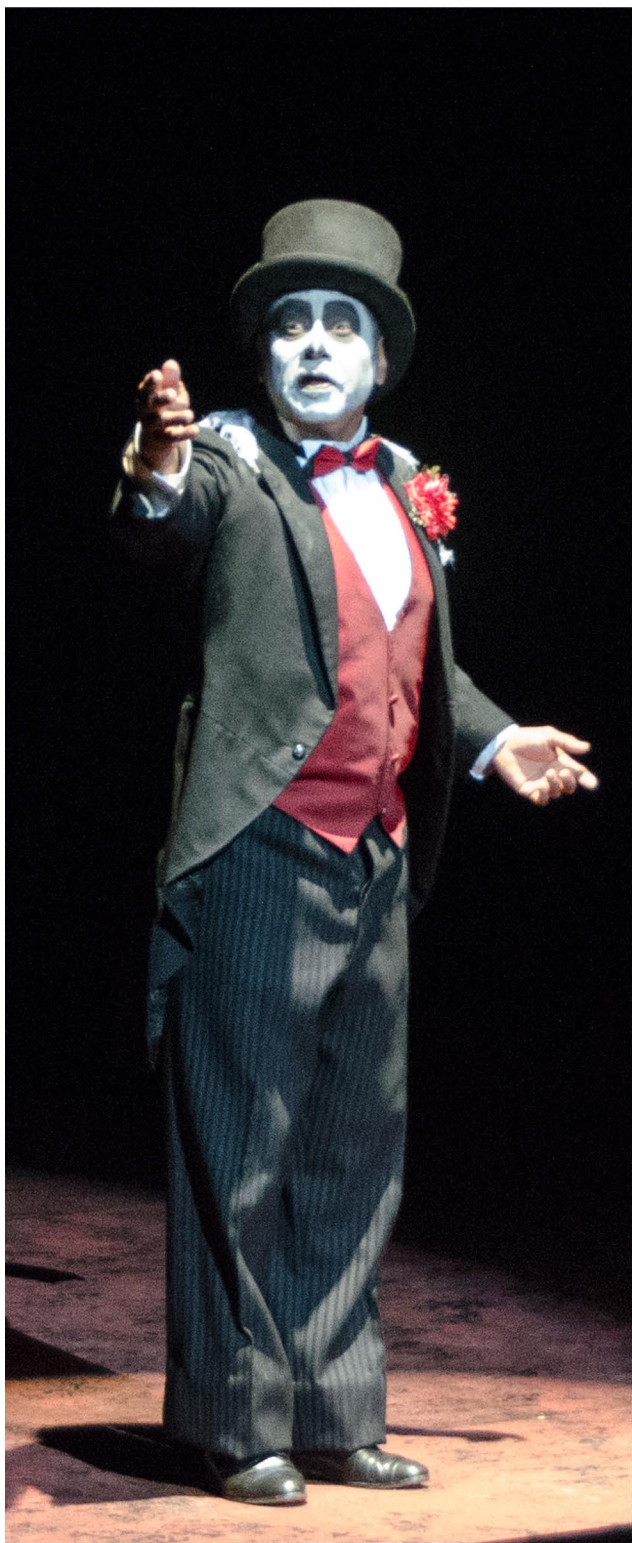
Warm bodies  
dancing like there is no tomorrow

I want fireworks and flowers  
huge speakers  
blasting cumbia for hours

I want to be the laughter  
and the joy  
be the pathway  
to a new horizon







# Muerte del Migrante

Cuando me muera  
quiero que me entierren en mi tierra  
quiero  
que pongas mi cuerpo en un avión  
y me regreses  
al lugar donde nací

no quiero morir  
lejos  
de la casa que deje  
quiero  
estar al lado de mi madre  
sentir  
la humedad de la tierra  
y descansar en paz

Cuando yo me vine a este lado  
vine con la ilusión de algún día regresar  
vine sabiendo  
que al cruzar el desierto  
mi destino  
sería una lucha

y ahora  
que mi cuerpo se cansa  
que solo me quedan  
las memorias  
de mi casa

quiero regresar  
y sentir un puño de tierra  
sobre mi tumba  
en mi honor  
que crezca un árbol de mangos

quiero que al probarlos  
recuerden  
que dulce es vivir

# Muertito

soy el muertito  
que cada noviembre  
se despierta  
al ver tus velas  
al oler las comidas que preparas

esas flores que pones sobre mi tumba  
me recuerdan a los campos que rerecoría

que bonito es recordar

pero por qué lloras  
si en mi vida  
yo fui alegre  
porque tu llanto  
si te acuerdas  
de la voz en mi canto

acuérdate de lo bonito  
que es vivir  
lo bonito que es sonreír

así te quiero ver  
cada vez que pienses  
en mi memoria  
una sonrisa como sol

soy el muertito  
que descansa  
pero quiero que sepas  
que aquí estoy  
en momentos de tristeza  
aquí estoy  
y estaré







# Oracion de Lluvia

A todos le llega su hora  
este mundo es una bola  
rueda y rueda  
como pirinola

La ruleta de la vida  
como laberinto sin salida  
pero aquí estamos  
con la boca al cielo  
que llueva que llueva  
las bendiciones hacia la tierra  
que llueva que llueva  
un río de risas  
para  
calmar  
las tormentas en nuestras vidas





# Orgullo

Cuando se muere una jota  
all that is left is the glitter and the lights

remember the drunken nights at the club  
te acuerdas de los tacos  
after we left Splash or Lido's

the men, the women and sometimes times both  
pos ya que  
remember how we created our own sense of home  
when our mothers cursed us  
when our fathers felt ashamed of us  
we found each other  
in the lights  
in the music  
in our bodies  
we created our own sense of place

te acuerdas  
of the first boy you kissed  
under an ultra red light  
a cumbia playing in the background

or the first girl whose hair you smelled  
remember  
the taste of corona con sal y limón on her lips

how that night just felt right

cuando se muere una jota  
we are all taught to fear going to hell  
maybe that is why we try to recreate heaven here

remember how the club almost felt like a ceremony  
how in one night you would sweat all the pain away  
in one night  
you forget  
that this world thinks of you differently  
that this world condemns you to burn

what a sweet flame we are  
nosotros los gays  
to continue shining  
even in the afterlife



# Recuerdo

When I transition into the spirit world  
I want the world to remember me  
for inventing the next big invention  
for my personality which is weird and crazy  
my contributions to this city

I want to be remembered for the love and courage  
that lived within me  
Cuando me muera quiero ser recordada  
por ayudar a los niños

I want to be remembered for encountering aliens  
be remembered as the guy that created flying cars  
I want to be remembered for my cooking

for being a good person  
for the joy I've brought to the world  
how brave I was

I want my legacy to be  
my writing  
the jokes I've told  
the house I built in the land I left  
I want my legacy to be my children  
the respect I taught them,  
the love I gave them,  
the dreams I encourage

I want to be remembered  
for writing this poem





# Returning Home

They say death is the great equalizer  
for when we die  
we all return  
to darkness

we only step into the light  
to learn  
what joy means

did you know  
you are placed in this world  
to know what the sky looks like  
you are here  
so you can remember  
how warm a hug is

in the darkness  
all we have  
is memory  
we become ancestors so we can guide our beloved

How do you want to be remembered?

When they bring flowers in your honor  
What words do you want them to speak of you?

What will your legacy be?

when your grandchildren  
speak your name  
What prayers will they say?

You are here so collect stories like photographs  
pay attention to the sounds  
let your tongue memorize the taste of what it means  
to be alive  
pay attention  
we are all returning soon  
we are all going back home  
soon

# Transferred

Everyone is always scared of death  
like a dark shadow  
or a scary clown

when you say death  
people get spooked

but I am not  
My mami  
tells me that before this land was named  
a white man's name  
it used to be indigenous

Indigenous people have always known death  
to be a friend  
they believed that you never really die  
all a human being is energy  
so when we die our energy doesn't just go away  
it gets transferred  
into other things

your body becomes soil  
your breath is absorbed by plants  
all the words you spoke are engraved  
in someone's mind

When I die I want to come back as the nectar  
in a flower  
I want to be a bumblebee  
and sting all the people that were mean to me

I want to be the leaves on a tree  
just swaying back and forth like a swing

I want to be a cloud  
on the days that I am happy release a cool mist  
on the days that I am angry let out a loud thunder  
everyone is always scared of death  
but not me  
cause I know  
I am indigenous  
and one day I will stand as mighty as a redwood tree





The poems in this book were written in October 2017 and introduced at Teatro Visión's production of *La Muerte Baila* devised by Rebecca Martinez and the Milagro Theater Ensemble, October 12-22, 2017 at the School of Arts and Culture at the Mexican Heritage Plaza in San José, California. 418 community members contributed to these poems by responding to prompts about healing, broken hearts, and transitioning to the afterlife. To everyone who was a part of creating these poems: **¡Gracias!**

**Yosimar Reyes** is the artist in residence at Define American, a media and culture organization dedicated to shifting the conversation surrounding immigration and identity in a changing America. He is a nationally acclaimed poet, educator, performance artist, and public speaker. Born in Guerrero, Mexico, and raised in East San Jose, California, Reyes explores the themes of migration and sexuality in his work.

**Teatro Visión** is a Chicanx theater company serving the Latinx and other diverse communities of the Santa Clara Valley and the greater San Francisco Bay Area with a mission to create theater rooted in Chicanx and Latinx experiences to inspire the people of Santa Clara Valley and beyond to feel, think, and act to create a better world. Established in 1984, Teatro Visión has commissioned, developed, and produced over 60 plays for an audience of more than 145,000 patrons.

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