



Director, Enrique “Kiki” Álvarez, says that *Marina* is “an intimate story, told in a whisper . . .”

Shot in the fishing village of Gibara in just over 14 days, the film’s universal themes – and some that are uniquely Cuban – are refracted through the saltwater of the small inlet that defines the town.

The main character, Marina, returns from seven years in Havana to her family home in Gibara to find that her father has died and his house is occupied by a family of hurricane victims. Why she has decided to return and what may have gone on with her father is left unsaid. There is a suggestion that she was a prostitute in Havana, but that, too, is part of the mystery. It’s the present-day artifacts of an earlier life that become important in the film, not the narrative of what may or may not be factual events.

Gibara, not incidentally, is the home of Cuba’s *Festival Internacional del Cine Pobre*, (International Festival of Poor Cinema) and the film is dedicated to its founder, the late Cuban film director, Humberto Solás. Accordingly, the festival’s concept of independent, low-budget film was central to the making of *Marina*, with its minimal budget and few actors.

The changing role of ICAIC, the Cuban Film Institute, founded over 50 years ago, just after the revolution, is also reflected in *Marina*. Cuban filmmaking is becoming more independent, less “industrialized” and centralized, and with an increasing number of foreign co-productions. ICAIC’s president Omar González says that, “To create a Cuban cinema which will portend true development, we have to change the concept of industry, we must change, and contribute to changing, the exclusive prejudices in art.”

The short that precedes the film, *Año del Cerdo* (“Year of the Pig”) is a student thesis, a product of the international film school outside of Havana (*La Escuela Internacional de Cinema y Televisión*) where Kiki Álvarez is a director. In contrast to *Marina*, this is a lively exposition of the themes of chance and fate – set in Havana’s Chinatown.

Want to see Cuba for yourself? Travel there has become a little easier although the U.S. government still imposes draconian restrictions on its citizens and residents. Anya Achtenberg, a member of the Minnesota Cuba Committee is planning two licensed trips to Cuba this year. You can talk to her, pick up a flyer, and visit the “Arts Focus on Cuba” Facebook page. In addition, many other groups, including some local ones like Obsidian Arts, Global Volunteers and the Augsburg Center for Global Education are sending delegations. For more information about how to join one of them, please check out the travel link on the Minnesota Cuba Committee’s website.

Upcoming films and other events

Coming up next week, is the second in the Minnesota Cuban Film Festival, *El Brigadista* (“*The Teacher*”), a film from 1977 based on a fictionalized character in the post-revolution literacy brigades that went out across the country to teach reading and writing to illiterate *campesinos* and workers. Many of the volunteers were teenagers who had never been away from home before, yet they succeeded in bringing the Cuban literacy rate to near 100% and the effort served as a model for Nicaragua and other impoverished countries.

On Friday, February 22, University of Minnesota Professor August Nimtz, will present the new English translation of *Race in Cuba*, a collection of essays by Esteban Morales, who has been an active participant in the Cuban revolutionary project for over fifty years and is one of Cuba’s most prominent Afro-Cuban intellectuals. The book was edited by August Nimtz and St. John’s/St. Benedict’s Professor Gary Prevost. The event is at May Day Books, 301 Cedar Avenue, Minneapolis, at 7:00 pm.

The Minnesota Cuba Committee meets every two weeks The next meeting is on February 24; check the website or call for more information.

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