



**Cuban-born musician** Victor Alvarez is the subject and narrator of this moving documentary. Filmed during his first return to Cuba in 2010, 43 years after being one among more than 14,000 children separated from family and nation via the CIA-orchestrated “Operation Peter Pan,” the work gently invites us into Victor’s journey.

We are haunted by the poetry of Cuban street music, with its bittersweet refrains of departures, arrivals, deep love and nostalgia as we move with Victor through remembered spaces and places. The generosity of the Cuban people embraces him warmly, profoundly, in reunion and new encounters with family, childhood friends, musicians and other community members.

The music Victor learned from his mother and his barrio, that he carried from his native land in his heart and has shared with thousands of others, helped keep his essential *Cubanismo* intact. When he asks his fellow Cuban musicians the deep questions about his own musicianship he receives honest answers. Victor’s sincerity and the vitality of a remembered paradise, lost and found, shine throughout this exposition by US director Carlos G. Maier.

Operation Peter Pan was a massive anti-revolutionary campaign carried out by the CIA in collaboration with the US State Department, the Catholic church in Miami, various Cuban counter-revolutionaries and at least two major airlines—KLM and Pan American. The concept behind the campaign was the immediate and traumatic disruption of social relations in revolutionary Cuba and the creation of a significant “brain-drain” for the future of the nation. Many of the children taken out of Cuba were from the more educated and elite classes. A widespread multimedia propaganda onslaught was implemented to instill unwarranted fears in parents that their children would be taken from them by the revolutionary Cuban government, who would place the children in service to the new nation or send them to the USSR. Suddenly, visa waivers were signed and free one-way airline tickets became available for children 16 years and younger, to expedite what is to date the largest exodus of unaccompanied minors in the western hemisphere.

As a result of Operation Peter Pan, families were permanently broken. The children taken, or those “sent” away by loving parents who thought a reunification would be only a few years away, often were placed in abusive or neglectful care environments. There were, of course many children who were more fortunate in their care placements. But the majority of these people never saw Cuba again.

Victor Alvarez’s revolutionary and rebellious roots have nurtured him. He has had the willingness and courage to develop his Cuban musicianship in a forced exile and is living his life in gratitude for the gifts given him and in solidarity with humanity. We are so lucky to share his story and to spend time with him this evening.

**Who are the Cuban Five?** If you haven’t heard about the Cuban Five, please take a moment to review this case, which has received little attention in most of the US press.

In September 1998, five Cuban men were imprisoned in the US for trying to monitor Miami exile groups planning violent acts against Cuba. They were never actually charged with espionage. Four are still in prison with four life sentences between them; one is on three-year parole in Florida. Appeals continue in the case, with one of the current issues being the discovery that Miami reporters were paid by the US government to write inflammatory articles while the trial was underway. More information can be found at [www.minnesotacubacommittee.org](http://www.minnesotacubacommittee.org).

*A discussion led by Victor Alvarez, here from Santa Fe, NM as a special guest of the Festival, will be held following the film at Pracna on Main (take a left through the lobby).*

### Upcoming films and other events

**Coming up next Thursday** is the fifth feature in the Minnesota Cuban Film Festival, *Fabula*, “A Fable,” (2011, Cuba/Canada, 92 min.) by Lester Hamlet, the director of the 2012 Festival’s *Casa Vieja*. A young Havana couple plumb the depths of their love and dreams in a city fraught with economic hardship.

**Pastors for Peace and Venceremos Brigade travel challenges:** In July, two national delegations will again challenge US restrictions on travel to Cuba. Check our website for information on how you can join one of the caravans or participate in the annual send-off event in Minneapolis.

**The Minnesota Cuba Committee** meets every two weeks. The next meeting is on Sunday, March 24, at 6:00 pm at Boneshaker Books. Anyone interested in finding out more about our work is welcome.

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