

# show bulletin



## GROWING UP WITH FCCMT

### Antonio Belmar Reflects on Seven Years of Community Theatre

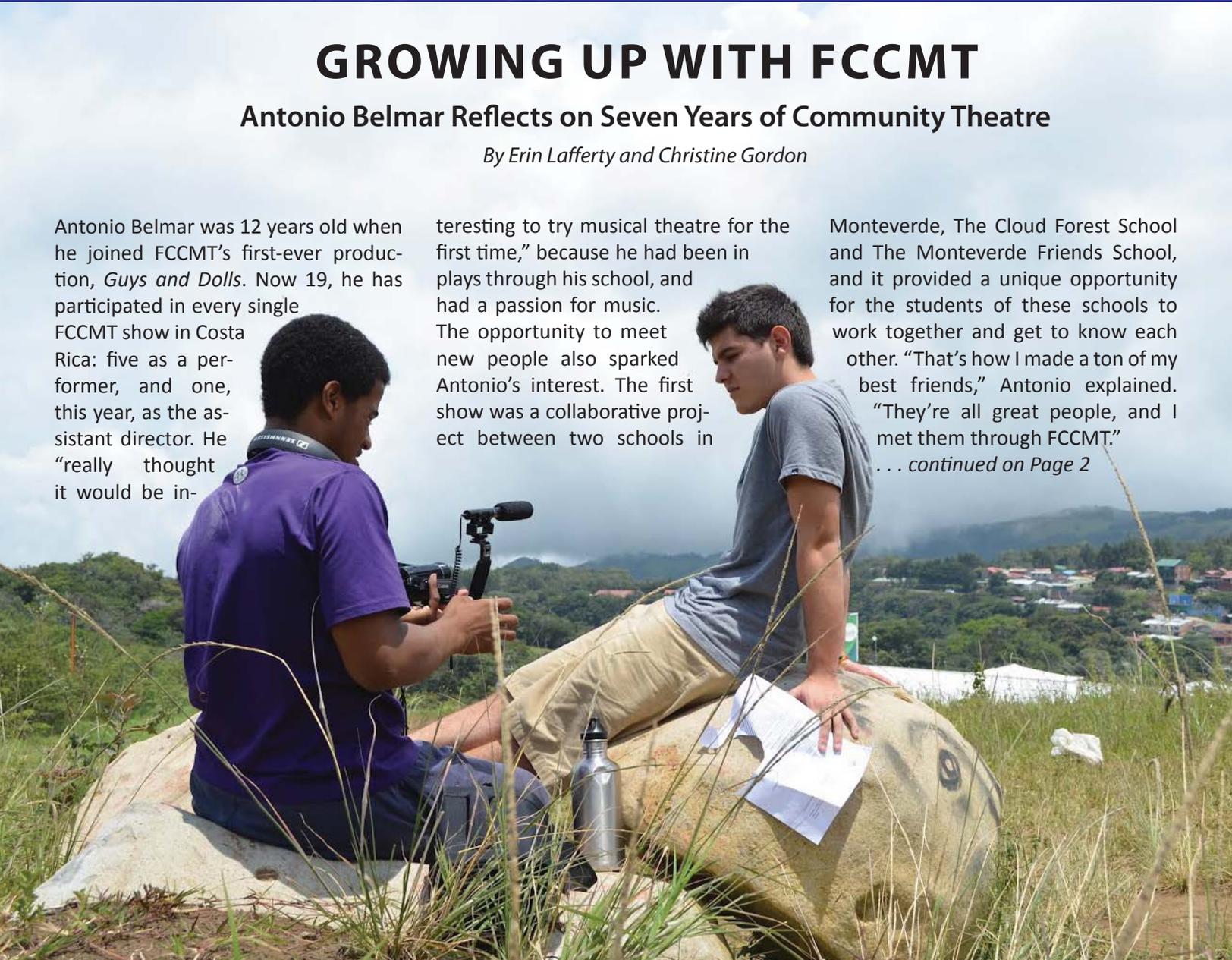
By Erin Lafferty and Christine Gordon

Antonio Belmar was 12 years old when he joined FCCMT's first-ever production, *Guys and Dolls*. Now 19, he has participated in every single FCCMT show in Costa Rica: five as a performer, and one, this year, as the assistant director. He "really thought it would be in-

teresting to try musical theatre for the first time," because he had been in plays through his school, and had a passion for music. The opportunity to meet new people also sparked Antonio's interest. The first show was a collaborative project between two schools in

Monteverde, The Cloud Forest School and The Monteverde Friends School, and it provided a unique opportunity for the students of these schools to work together and get to know each other. "That's how I made a ton of my best friends," Antonio explained. "They're all great people, and I met them through FCCMT."

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Antonio played the role of Nicely Nicely Johnson in that first musical. The show gave Antonio a platform to practice singing, which is something that he loves to do. "I thought that if I practiced more and was in more shows, I could definitely get way better at it. Maybe one day perform for a living."

Over the years, being a part of FCCMT not only helped Antonio to become a better singer and actor but allowed him to come out of his shell and become more confident as a person. "Because of Far Corners, I'm not scared to go on stage and act stupid, or go on stage and act funny, or act silly, or do something hilarious or something ridiculous. Because I know that it's only theatre, but it's hard to learn that at first. But once you learn it, it's super fun."

Antonio has seen a lot of changes in FCCMT's shows over the years. "Now we actually have a nice stage and lighting and musicians that come all the way from San José."

Antonio was particularly excited about the increased participation of kids from other schools. "We have kids from seven schools. It's really great—the diversity is much greater now." More kids and more years of practice also helped improve the productions. "The level of talent is also really great. I see a lot of potential in every single kid that is doing this musical. People are really serious about putting on a good show."

Now that Antonio is a staff member, he has a new perspective on FCCMT and musical

theatre productions. "I've learned a lot about how to actually put on a show," he said. "You hear everything that's going on: getting a space to practice in, getting things for evening activities, buying stuff for the show, designing costumes, managing money, bringing lights from San José. You don't really hear about that as part of the cast."

While being a staff member is a great learning opportunity, it also means giving up part of the Musical Theatre Connections experience—performing. "You see the kids practicing, and you see the kids rehearsing, and you kind of miss it. Because it's something you've been doing for the last five, six years, that you're not a part of anymore. I mean, in a way you are because you're helping make this happen and you're helping these kids, but at the same time you're not

actually participating in the show."

But Antonio gets great satisfaction out of knowing that he is providing other youths from his town with the opportunity that has meant so much to him. "FCCMT has taught me about cooperation, hard work, collaborative theatre, and a lot of different things that are really useful in going to school and studying. It's also shown me what it is to work hard for something you want, and that you don't necessarily have to have that much money to make something great happen."



Volunteer Erin Lafferty applies Antonio's make-up for the 2010 production of *Oliver*, as fellow actor José Daniel looks on. (Photo by Erin Clarke)

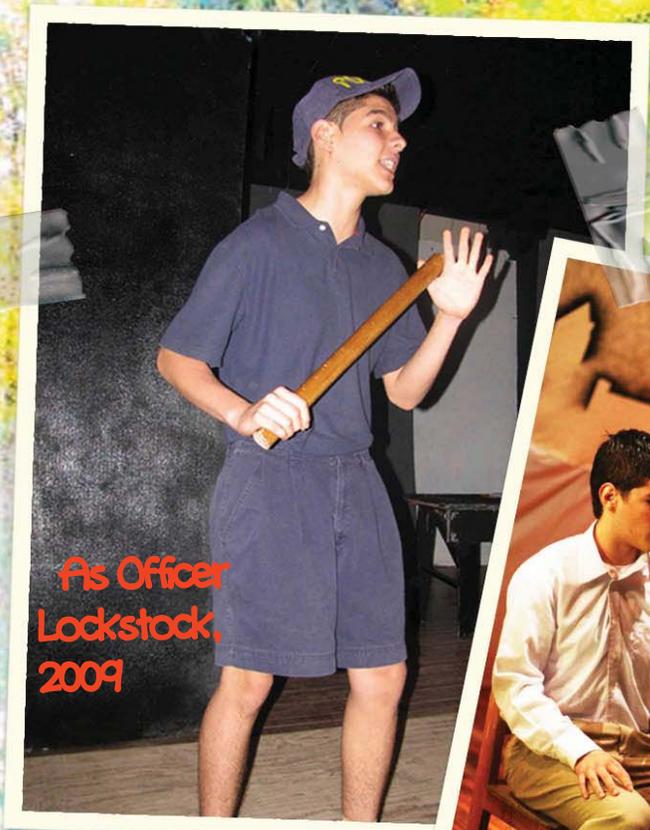
# Antonio Belmar

## THROUGH THE YEARS

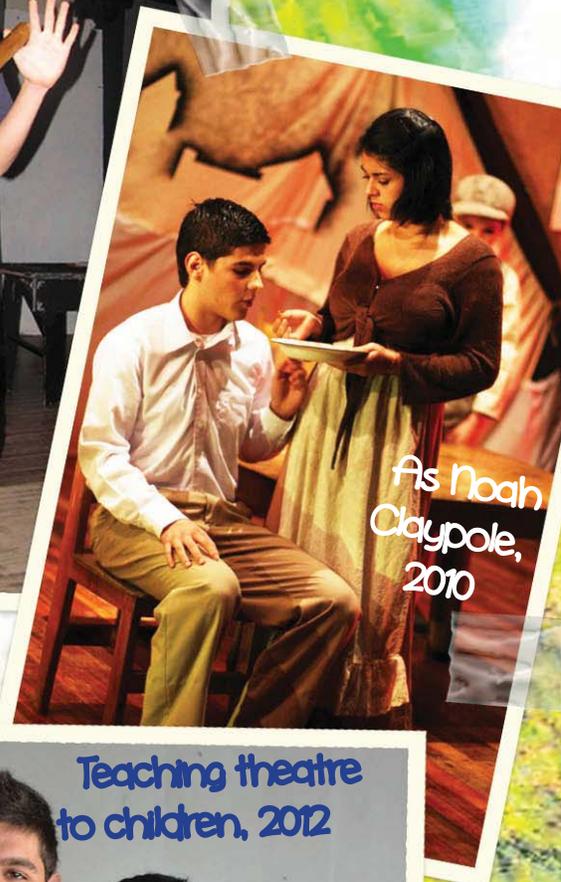
As Harold Hill, 2007



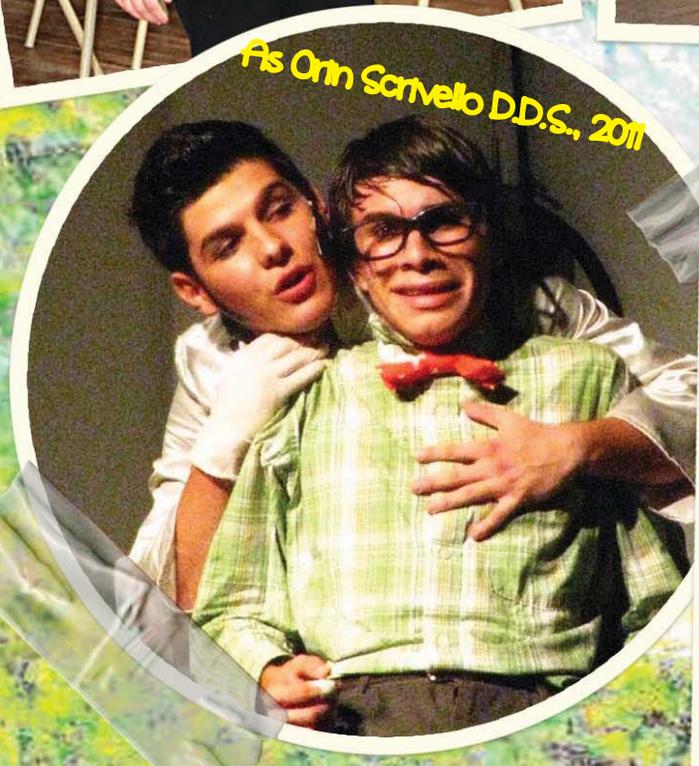
As Officer Lockstock, 2009



As Noah Claypole, 2010

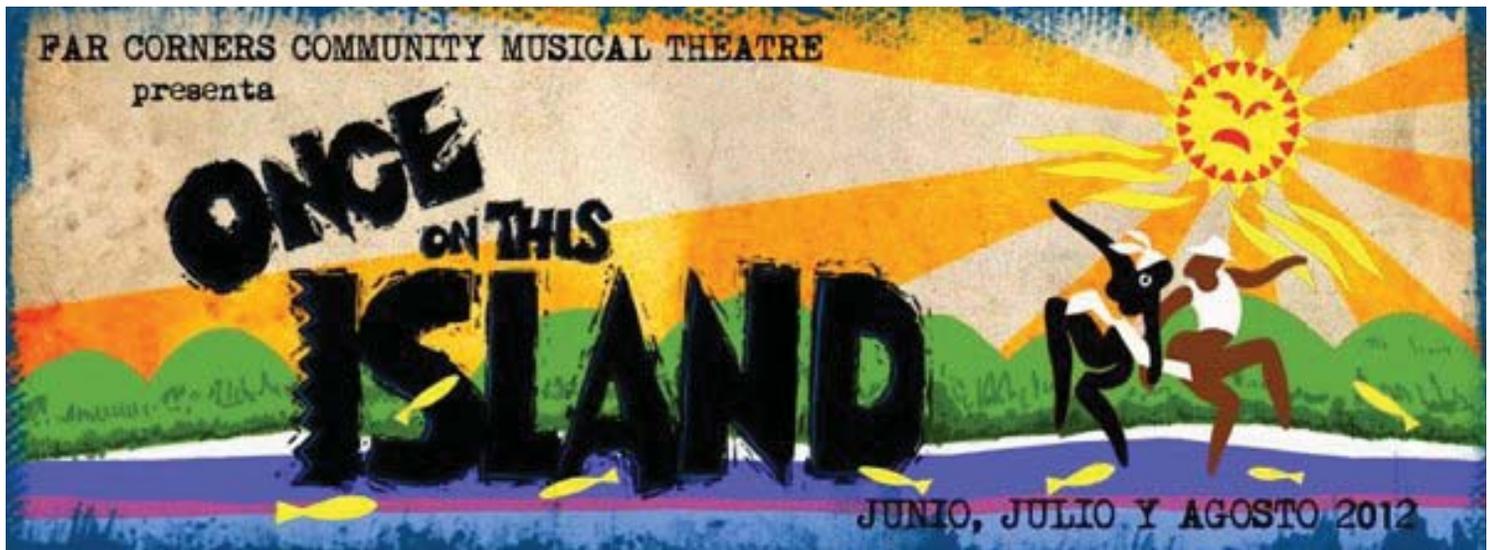


As Orin Scrivello D.D.S., 2011



Teaching theatre to children, 2012





## En Esta Isla: Cast Profiles — Kelly, Andres, and Jonathan

By Ezekiel Blackwell



**Kelly**  
Age: 14

*School:* Centro de Educación Creativa  
*Role in the Show:* **Ti Mouné**

Q: Why do you like doing theatre, specifically?

A: I started liking theatre in third grade. My teacher, Jesse, he made a lot of plays from third grade to fifth grade. I love doing it. I just felt like it was the thing I was meant to do. It made me happy. And from sixth grade to now, I've been with Far Corners [Community Musical Theatre], and I like it.

Q: What has been your favorite part of this process with *En Esta Isla*?

A: Being with people that like doing the same thing I like doing.

Q: In one sentence, what is *En Esta Isla* about?

A: An island!



**Andres**  
Age: 15

*School:* Escuela de los Amigos  
*Role in the Show:* **Daniel**

Q: Why do you like doing theatre, specifically?

A: I like doing theatre because it allows me to play somebody who I'm not, who is totally different from me. And I get to experience how it feels to be like that.

Q: What has been your favorite part of this process with *En Esta Isla*?

A: Learning a bunch of different things. Different tricks, like how to sing higher and lower. And dancing also.

Q: What is *En Esta Isla* about?

A: This show is about a bet between the gods about love and death.



**Jonathan**  
Age: 16

*School:* Homeschooled  
*Role in the Show:* **Agwe/chorus**

Q: Why do you like doing theatre, specifically?

A: You get so much experience out of everything you do—singing or dancing. It builds up your confidence. And it's a great way to be with your friends and do something that you all love.

Q: What has been your favorite part of this process with *En Esta Isla*?

A: Working with Jaelyn has been my favorite, finding my voice. And Kyle really got me into hip-hop. Once I got done with dancing with Kyle, one of these nights I just went home and started looking at hip-hop dance videos. It was fun!

Q: What is *En Esta Isla* about?

A: Love. Finding love. Loving someone no matter what.



# Far East Community Musical Theatre:

## Using the Internet to help expand FCCMT into China

By Christine Gordon

*China* has been on Lisa Burns' mind for some time. Lisa, the Director of Far Corners Community Musical Theatre, has planned to create an ongoing program in China since her first experience there: facilitating a musical theatre production at Jiujiang University. "There's a really strong interest there," Lisa said. "It's worth going back to China." A key step toward going back, with the ultimate goal of establishing Musical Theatre Connections: China—is the launch of a Chinese-language version of the FCCMT website.



Tabitha Brown in Shanghai along the Wusong River near Shanghai's Moganshan Lu art district. (Photo by Martha Tapley)

Often considered an American phenomenon, musical theatre is rather novel to the Chinese people. Although the country has a long history of musical performances (Chinese opera dates back to the third century CE), it has only been during the last decade that the Chinese people have been exposed to Broadway-style musicals. A touring production of *Les Miserables* opened in Shanghai in 2002, and, in 2006, the Beijing Playhouse opened with a performance of *A Christmas Carol*. The Beijing Playhouse performs in English

Chinese musicals to the West within a few years. But considering the fact that China is comprised of over 1.3 billion people, and fewer than 20 million of these reside in Beijing, it is safe to say that the majority of Chinese have not yet had a musical theatre experience, among them Chinese students.

FCCMT is on the forefront of bringing musical theatre to Chinese students. Back in 2007 and 2008, Lisa and FCCMT veteran volunteer Rachel Mason helped the students put on a production of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

the performance, it was all them. Also unlike the current program in Monteverde, the students were still in school while the production was underway. The students were so excited about their show that they managed to balance classwork and military responsibilities while remaining dedicated to their production.

FCCMT encountered many challenges during the production of *Fiddler*. They met with lots of red tape and little support overall. It was also difficult to put on the show without the help of the many experienced volunteers that make the Monteverde program run so well. However, the sheer enthusiasm of the students, along with the proven structure of the Musical Theatre Connections (MTC) program, encouraged Lisa to develop the idea for MTC: China. The new Chinese-language website is essential to this process not only because of language barriers but because she wants potential Chinese partners to know how seriously FCCMT is taking this endeavor and how much a China program means to the organization. She affirmed that "we're not just an American thing." . . . *continued on Page 6*



with Mandarin subtitles, similar to how many operas are performed in the Western world. The Songlei Musical Theater Ensemble, a newer company located in the Dongcheng District of Beijing, performs original musicals in Mandarin with the intent of bringing

where we had to cut people." This production was unique in other ways, too. Unlike the shows in Monteverde, Costa Rica, *Fiddler* was produced and performed by university students. "The students did everything," Lisa said. From the costumes to the sets to

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Several FCCMT volunteers are hard at work building the new Chinese-language site. One of these is Julianne Lovergine, who was recruited to translate FCCMT website content into Mandarin. Julianne was introduced to Chinese culture when her high school in Vermont began Journey East: a cultural exchange program through which a group of students participated in a one-month performing arts exchange at a college in Hohhot, China. The following fall, a group of students from the college came to visit her high school, and her

family hosted the girl she had grown closest to during her trip to China. It was this amazing experience that fueled her desire to travel and to pursue a degree in Chinese language and culture. Julianne is thrilled to be a part of an organization that provides inspiring opportunities for others, like Journey East was for her.

Another volunteer, Tabitha Brown, is assisting with translation as well as designing the Chinese-language site.

Tabitha first visited China at age 16, but she has always been curious about Chinese history and culture. Aside from her interest in China, Tabitha's experience with writing and the arts, as well as her interest in puppetry and theatre, make her a great match for FCCMT. Tabitha is currently working on the site remotely from China. Although Tabitha has lived and worked in China for two years now, she feels she has "barely scratched the surface when it comes to learning about the real China."

Tabitha faces many challenges working from China. "Timing has been difficult when it comes to Julianne, Sara (Clark, FCCMT's volunteer coordinator) and I connecting." Time zones are the enemy of any international organization, but Tabitha has the added obstacle of the real Great Wall of China—the Firewall. "I need an Internet proxy service to get access to a lot of websites," she said. Luckily for Tabitha, she was able to obtain additional security that allowed her to more freely use her Internet connection. All of her diligence will surely pay in the form of a fantastic Chinese-language website which will serve as China's doorway to Far Corners Community Musical Theatre.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/23/arts/23iht-chinatheater23.html?pagewanted=all>

Lisa Burns hiking from Jinshanling and Simatai on the Great Wall.  
(Photo by Rachel Mason)

音乐剧

En Esta Isla poster design by Alvaro Garcia

# MUY PRONTO

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## En Esta Isla: Cast Profiles — Chopper, Hannah, and Daniela

By Ezekiel Blackwell



**Chopper**

Age: 15

**School:** Walter Johnson High School  
**Role in the Show:** **Andrea**

**Q:** Why do you like doing theatre, specifically?

**A:** I like totally becoming a different person and developing things about the person that even the audience doesn't see. And allowing it to control the emotion and how I portray the character.

**Q:** What has been your favorite part of this process with *En Esta Isla*?

**A:** The kids and the staff. They're just great. And they're really easy to work with and it's fantastic.

**Q:** What is *En Esta Isla* about?

**A:** The power of love.



**Hannah**

Age: 17

**School:** Arlington High School;  
**Role in the Show:** **Cuentacuento**

**Q:** Why do you like doing theatre, specifically?

**A:** I love the energy of it, when I'm on stage. And I also like the community that forms in the cast. I think it's amazing and magical.

**Q:** What has been your favorite part of this process with *En Esta Isla*?

**A:** The people. And the songs. And the choreography and everything.

**Q:** What is *En Esta Isla* about?

**A:** A girl who dies for love.



**Daniela**

Age: 11

**School:** Escuela Rafael Arguedas Herrera; **Role in the Show:** **Asaka**

**Q:** Why do you like doing theatre, specifically?

**A:** I like theatre because it is a way to learn about other people. It's relaxing, enjoyable, being another character. I like to feel, and I love theatre.

**Q:** What has been your favorite part of this process with *En Esta Isla*?

**A:** My favorite part of this play is my role. When it comes time to act and sing, I like it a lot.

**Q:** What is *En Esta Isla* about?

**A:** The show is about a prohibited love, something that will never happen. And that all people should be valued as equals. Money isn't important.





Newsletter Editor: Christine Gordon, Newsletter Lay



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Want to get involved? For more information, visit:  
<http://www.farcornersmusicals.org/work-with-us.html>



out & Design: Angelica Covington, Photos on Pages 8 & 9: Paul Lambeth





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