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Under The Rubble Of The Berlin Wall, A South Florida Playwright Finds More Of Her Cuban Roots

WLRN 91.3 FM | By [Christine DiMattei](#)

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LISTEN • 4:45



V. Garcia /

Vanessa Garcia describes her "Ich Bin Ein Berliner" as "a memory play in audio form."

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In her latest play, "Ich Bin Ein Berliner," Vanessa Garcia evokes her childhood memory of the fall of the Iron Curtain.

There are many things playwright Vanessa Garcia can recall about that school day in November 1989.

Like passing notes to her fifth grade classmates suggesting they hum Willie Nelson's "On The Road Again" in unison. Then — out of the blue — the request over the school loudspeaker that teachers turn on their classroom television sets. The sonorous voice of the TV news anchor, delivering history in the making.

"The Berlin Wall is no more . . ."

And Garcia remembers her 11-year-old self bursting into tears. Also, one of her classmates asking: "Why are you *crying*?"

Garcia's quest to answer that question fully is central to her audio play titled "Ich Bin Ein Berliner."

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The title refers to a Cold War speech made by President John F. Kennedy in Germany in 1963. Standing at the wall that divided Berlin into democratic and communist sectors, Kennedy expressed solidarity with West Berliners by stating, in their own language, that he was one of them.

Twenty-four years later, also in West Berlin, President Ronald Reagan would deliver his famous challenge to the eighth and last leader of the Soviet Union: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

"Those two moments, I feel, are so linked to our American-ness," said Garcia.

"Ich Bin Ein Berliner," described as "a memory play in audio form," is narrated by Garcia herself. Voice actors play various other characters; among them, Garcia's mischievous fifth grade classmates and her teacher Miss Casales.

for freedom and her own family history.

"I felt very connected to those kids in Berlin. I felt like I was one of them," Garcia said.

Decades later, she continually contemplates a different "wall" – the invisible one between the United States and Cuba. And what it will take to finally "tear it down."

Garcia says "I'm a Berliner," applies to her, too.

"I've been hearing about Cuba since I was in my mother's womb. And so that connection to a place that you might not be from – but that is everything to you – is what that statement also means to me," she said.

IF YOU GO:

"Ich Bin Ein Berliner" a memory play in audio form by Vanessa Garcia.

Florida Atlantic University's Theatre Lab will premiere the show with an opening weekend of in-person, socially-distanced, outdoor "enhanced listening experiences."

WHERE:

Amphitheater outside of the University Theatre on FAU's Boca Raton campus. Seating is limited to 35 audience members per event.

WHEN:

Saturday, April 3, at 6:30 and 9 p.m. and Sunday, April 4, at 6:30 p.m. – for the in-person experiences

Streaming online starting Monday, April 5, 2021 through Sunday, May 23

For more information: fauevents.universiticket.com

This interview is part of "Intermission," WLRN's series looking at how South Florida's arts community is coping during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We've also been hearing from people who are NOT artists by trade, but who are tapping

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Christine DiMattei

Years ago, after racking her brains trying to find a fun, engaging, creative night gig to subsidize her acting habit, Chris decided to ride her commercial voiceover experience into the fast-paced world of radio broadcasting. She started out with traffic reporting, moved on to news -- and never looked back. Since then, Chris has worked in newsrooms throughout South Florida, producing stories for radio broadcasts and the web.

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