



From the Abuelas' Window, A new musical

**Book and lyrics
by Nancy Burke**

**Music by
Ignacio Valdivia**

**Additional lyrics
by Ed Levy**

Synopsis

In a rural farming village in the Central Valley of Chile, a young girl (Maribel) comes of age. Her father (Rolando) is 'disappeared' by Pinochet's junta and she receives a gift of an old 'magic' bicycle with which she joins the resistance.

The three abuelas, tricky old witches with magic up their sleeves, live in a tall, narrow house overlooking the family's garden. The abuelas and the children's mother (Ines) set their sights on the village school-turned-detention center, where others await transport under the eye of the evil captain. The daughters of Rolando use three gifts from the abuelas to reunite a lost child with her parents who are among the imprisoned. All hope someone, somewhere is doing the same for their father.

Humor, lovable characters and elements of magic realism lighten the plot making this a play for the entire family.

Characters:

The Family

Maribel, 12-14 year old girl

Fabia, 8-10 year old girl

Ines, age 39

Rolando, age 40

The Abuelas

Wilfreda, age 70's

Marta, age 70's

Zoraida, age 80's

Village Grocer Family

Hector Herrera, age 40

Hilma Herrera, age 39

Paula, age 16

Family in Hiding

Carmen, age 30ish

Eduardo, age 30ish

Gabriela, age 9

Heroes and Villains

Manuel, soldier, age 20

Padre Don, pastor, age late 50's

The Captain, Junta leader, early 50's

Background/Chorus

Small group of people held in the detention center

Setting

Small Village in Central Valley of Chile

Time Period: 1970 to 1973

Length of Play: 90 Minutes

Sets

Walled garden of the Lozano's home

Kitchen of the Lozano's home

Village School/detention center exterior and interior

Orchard and Road to Village

Village Church interior

Barn of the Abuelas' house

Plaza at La Moneda (for epilogue)

*Can do on a blank stage as well.

Background- Historical/Cultural

In September 1973, Augusto Pinochet led a military coup to overthrow the Allende government of Chile and established a dictatorship that ruled until 1990. Under his regime, thousands of Chileans were arrested and disappeared.

Many families of the disappeared still march at La Moneda, the presidential palace in Santiago de Chile demanding to know the fate of their loved ones.

The Museum of Memory and Human Rights, (Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos) in Santiago is a memorial for the victims of the Pinochet dictatorship as Chile continues to address its past and promote tolerance and respect for human rights.

This play attempts to honor the families of the disappeared and is dedicated to fostering understanding of the reasons families emigrate to the United States to become our neighbors and friends.



Nancy Burke, Librettist and Lyricist

Nancy Burke is a novelist, playwright and screenwriter. Her work includes ***From the Abuelas' Window***, ***If I Could Paint the Moon Black***, ***Only the Women are Burning*** and ***Death Cleaning and Other Units of Measure***.

She was a finalist for the J.F. Powers Prize for Short Fiction for ***At the Pool*** (2020). Short plays include ***Midway Island, 1944*** and ***Make Yourself at Home***. Her screenplay adaptation of ***Only the Women are Burning*** was a finalist in the Boston Screenplay Competition (2023). This is her first musical.

She teaches writing at the university level and was responsible for fundraising for refugee resettlement efforts at St. Theresa of Calcutta parish, Montclair, NJ. [Visit Website](#)



Ignacio Valdivia, Composer

Ignacio Valdivia is a Chilean composer, guitarist and producer. He premiered two original pieces with the Lehigh Valley Chamber Orchestra, *Elegy N°1*, (2023), commissioned by Nicolas Gomez Amin, and *La sinfonia del Muro de Flores* (2024), an interdisciplinary project directed by Daniel Djuro-Goiricelaya.

He has written original music for stage plays including Federico Garcia Lorca's *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* (2018) and *Las Dos Muertes* (2025).

Original arrangements and orchestrations include *Les Miserables'* (2019), *Into the Woods* (2023), *Moulin Rouge* (2022), *Jesus Christ Superstar* (2023 and 2025), *Aladdin* (2021 and 2024), *Beetlejuice* (2023), *Oliver* (2024) and *Beauty and the Beast* (2024).

He is a regular presence in the independent music scene in Santiago de Chile as part of the band, *Hijo de Ladron* and as a collaborator with *Alfileria*, *Futnes*, *Gatajazz*, among others.

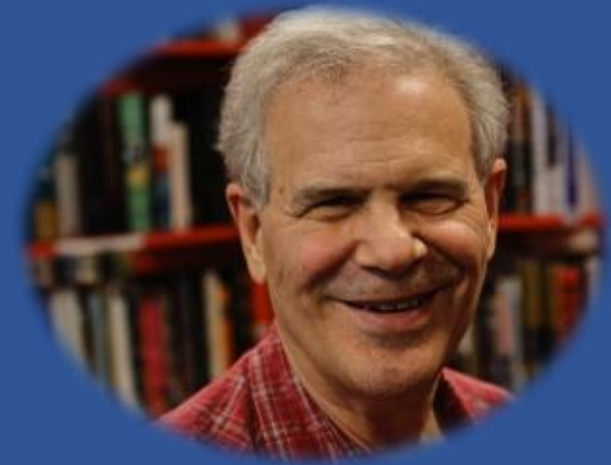


Ed Levy, Lyricist

Ed Levy is a librettist and lyricist trained at the Lehman Engel Musical Theater Workshop, the Einhorn School of Performing Arts (ESPA, and the Dramatist Guild Institute. His work includes ***Bystander*** (Best Short Play or Musical, NY Summerfest, Hudson Guild Theater, 2017) ***Sound Bites 5.0*** Best Music, Signature Theater, 2018). He wrote lyrics and libretto for ***Uncomfortable Sex***, 2017, ***Picket Line, 1936, Trifles***, and ***Lucy/Bluebeard***.

In addition to ***Abuelas'*** he is at work on a full-length musical, ***Striking Flint!***

Additional credits include Assistant Director member of The Directors Guild of America on ***The Wiz***, directed by Sidney Lumet with Michale Jackson and Diana Ross, ***Kramer vs. Kramer*** directed by Robert Benton with Dustin Hoffman and Meryl Streep, ***Stardust Memories*** directed by Woody Allen with Woody Allen and Charlotte Rampling, and many more. [Visit website](#)



Song List in Order

Welcome to Our Valley – page 3
Song for Manuel – page 9
Desaparecido – page 11
If Papa Were Here – page 15
Dirty and Dusty – page 20
After Dirty and Dusty – page 23
Free to be Free – page 24
Move Along, Move Along – page 25
Arpilleras – page 31
Counting on Your Courage – page 40
In the Orchard – (Maribel and Gabriela) – page 44
We'll Do It For Our Papas – page 46

How Can I Thank You – page 53
The Magic Flows – page 54
Song for Manuel (reprise) – page 57
How Can I Be a Soldier? – page 75
Reckless – page 81
Today's Special – page 84
Holding Onto Hope – page 88
This Little House – page 90
One Last Ride – page 99
The Only Way to Live – page 102
Song for Manuel (reprise #2) – page 105
Whisper In The Dark – page 109

Musicians required include guitarist and pianist minimally. For full orchestration, estimate 12-13 musicians..

Preview of Selected Songs (click on title)

[Welcome to Our Valley](#)

[Count Your Blessings](#)

[If Papa Were Here](#)

[Today's Special](#)

[Move Along](#)

[This Little House](#)



Follow here for
video of opening
song performance
at MTF or [click
here.](#)

Many thanks to Alelí Cordero and Rocío Cancino who lent their voices
to these demos.

For copy of script, please contact Nancy (nancyburke2@gmail.com)
or 973-747-5695.

Show Timeline:

- Novel published in 2005 (reviews)
- Libretto Based on the novel started February 2023
- Ed Levy, lyricist, joins project in March 2023
- Ignacio Valdivia, composer, joins project, September 2023
- Early draft Zoom reading, August 2024
- Dramaturg review, August 2025
- Dramaturg/table read, September, 2025
- Developmental Staged Reading, November 2025
- Novel submitted for re-release at Apprentice House Press, March 2026
- Revisions to libretto and lyrics, 2025 to 2026.
- New Jersey Council of the Arts grant application
- Song performance at Vanguard Theater's Montclair Theater Festival, July 2026
- Research visit to Santiago de Chile by Nancy Burke, September 2026
- SPARK Theatre Festival by Emerging Artist Theatre, Staged Reading (Excerpts) November 22, 2026, at 5:00 PM

The Abuelas' Team is Seeking the Following Next Steps and Support:

Crowdsource Funding for Festival or Small Theatre Production is underway via **GOFUNDME**.

Seeking theatre production company to stage a workshop of the full musical.

Production team and investors to develop a full production for stage – inquiries welcome and encouraged!

Contact us at nancyburke2@gmail.com or 973 747 5695.