

ALTERPIECE OF YUMBEL

ISDORA AGUIRRE



T H E A T R E

ALTARPIECE OF YUMBEL

(RETABLO DE YUMBEL)

A Play by ISIDORA AGUIRRE

Translated by:
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RETABLO DE YUMBEL *lar*

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The play Altarpiece of Yumbel takes place at the town square of Yumbel (a small town in South of Chile, at the beginning of the year 1980, on the eve of its patron saint, Saint Sebastian.

CHARACTERS:

Actors: Alejandro, 35 years old
 Marta, 30 years old (Alejandro's sister in law)
 Eduardo (friend of Alejandro)
 Magdalena, an Argentinian young woman.
 Actor 1

The actors represent the Roman Characters:
 Emperor Diocletian, Sebastian, Galerious,
 Torcuato, Proconsul and Tribune.

Popular Characters from Yumbel:

Juliana, a young girl
 The Chinchinero, his father, an "orquestra mman"

Mother 1, from the Association of the "arrested and disappeared" from Concepcion.

Mother 2, Mother 3 and Mother 4, (mothers or wives of the workers killed when the military coup, 1973, that ere found in Yumbel's cemetery in 1979).

Other characters (double-ups) for the celebration of the Saint, at the last scene.

SCENARY:

The square of a little town.
 A platform, center back-stage, on which is placed an altarpiece with three arches for the performance of the Roman "Episodes" (Diocletian, Third Century).
 Workshop area: the basket for the costumes, hangers, a mirror, seats.

ACCESSORIES:

Some "arpilleras" (sackcloth, sort of popular patching work) or painted "lienzos", with scenes of the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian will be needed. A small rag pony, with Roman ornaments, that Marta or Juliana tie around their waist. A flying golden angel, to be hang at one of the arches of the altarpiece.

MUSIC:

Aside from the incidental music, for the choreography (Juliana and Chinchinero, or Marta) a Gavotte (No. 6, English suite by J.S. Bach) arranged with popular folk instruments (Barroco Andino) is recommended. The stanzas that Juliana recites, are translated from de *Decimas*, ten line stanzas, from the Chilean popular tradition.

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This play is not yet published.
This translation, with the author participation, is not the final one.

PART ONE

Music introductory: orchestral, dramatic.
A voice is heard in darkness:

Yahweh asked Cain "Where is your brother Abel?"
"I don't know", he answered.
"Should I be my brother's keeper?"
And Yahweh told Cain: "Your brother's blood
is crying out for me from earth!"

SCENE 1

*The music changes into a lively folklorist
dance for the entrance of Julieta who is
carrying the banner of Saint Sebastian and
the "Chinchinero", who plays his instruments,
both are dancing. Then, the mothers enter, as
if they were coming out of the church. They
go round the square, following Juliana with
the banner. Chinchinero marks the rhythm as
soon as the dance stops.
Juliana says the ten line stanzas: ("Decimas")*

JULIANA See now, we celebrate
 in the square of Yumbel
 our patron, Saint Sebastian
 We invoke him with devotion
 for him piously ring the bells!
 Pilgrims have come, carnation
 and candles in hand
 the birds join in with their trills.
 Remember your mission
 and our requests, please, fulfill!

CHORUS

Grant us your favors, Saint Sebastian!

CHINCHINERO

The image of Saint Sebastian, that we worship in Yumbel, was brought here, long ago, by the Spanish conquerors. Say the stanzas, Juliana.

JULIANA From Spain came to Chillan
the most worshiped image:
it happened in such a way
that in Yumbel he wanted to stay,
God allowed this feat.
A Colonel was carrying it,
when, fleeing in wartime,
he was passing by Yumbel.
He buried here the saint
and forgot about him!

CHINCH. Later on, people from this place
when they dug in the sand
the sacred image found.
"The statue give us back!"
people claim from Chillan.
From Yumbel, they respond:

JULIANA "We can't give him away
Because here he wants to stay!

CHINCH. Not even with a pair of oxen
could they remove the saint!

MOTHER 2

Fulfill our request, Saint Sebastian!

MOTHER 3

Yes, do it, miraculous saint!

CHINCHINERO

Beware!: he is miraculous but very cunning: he fulfills requests, but if someone forgets to pay his vows, he returns him the bad deed. (*Announcing*) The actors arrive!

JULIANA

They will rehearse in the square!

Enter (the actors) Alejandro, Marta, Eduardo and Magdalena (who wears always sunglasses). They set down a basket of wardrobe back stage. Juliana announces:

JULIANA

The twentieth of this month of January, we celebrate our patron Saint Sebastian. The actors are going to stage a play entitled "Alterpiece of Yumbel"!

Drums rolls. The actors stay back stage, preparing the wardrobe and props.

- CHINCH. To this play, pay attention:
It narrates the cruel martyrdom
of the Christian Sebastian:
MOTHER 2 It is true, -it's no fiction-:
there's abuse... and no sanction!
MOTHER 3 You will see on the occasion
that this world remains the same:
JULIANA the criminals are free
and innocents in prison.
ALL THREE For abuse there's no sanction!
(Drums and cymbals)

(Lights to the front section-right)
INCIDENTAL BRIEF MUSIC

ALEJANDRO

(As a narrator) Summer 1980. It was Marta's idea to write a play to celebrate the Saint. I loved Marta. But she still loves her husband, -my brother Federico, tortured and killed, in 1975. Around this square, with old trees and chirping birds, people look happy. Nevertheless... it hasn't been long since here, in Yumbel, the earth had opened to deliver the corpses of 19 innocent men, killed after the military coup, that were, since then, on the long lists of the missing people, the so called... "arrested and disappeared"...

(Light on the front section-left)
INCIDENTAL MUSIC

MOTHER 1

These nineteen prisoners -not guilty, as it was proven
the trial- were executed a few days after the milita
coup... Till last year, in spite of the requests and
claims of mothers and wives, it was not possible to
obtain information about them. The executers, identifi
during the trial, are free. They claimed a law of amnesty.
formerly decreed, by the Military government. *(She leaves)*

*(Light returns to center stage, were
are Chinchinero, Juliana and the Mothers)*

CHINCHINERO In the play about
Saint Sebastian life and death,
he who wants to see, will see
what happened in Yumbel.

MOTHER 2 They persecuted innocence
but this land, mercifully
in search of justice,
released our loved ones
and opened to issue a sentence.

CHORUS Heavens demands for justice!

ACTOR 1

The rehearsal begins! Turn off the lights! *(Light goes
out)* Music, please!

*In the dark, the happy beats
of a Bach's Gavotte, explodes.*

EPISODE 1 OF THE ALTARPIECE

Bright and warm light over the golden parts of the Altarpiece, with the magic of religious imagery. Fixed like stamps, DIOCLETIAN, hand raised, and SEBASTIAN as a legionnaire, knee on the ground, helmet in his hand, while JULIANA, with a flag, CHINCHINERO beating the drum, and MARTA, with a mask, as a "Roman horseman" with a gracious pony tied around her waist, enter dancing the gavotte. Music stops. Juliana says the stanzas:

JULIANA The emperor had called
 Sebastian, the legionnaire,
 the August Diocletian
 had him in great affection.
 Sebastian was a Christian
 and people already knew
 about the cruel persecution:
 death was the ration
 Christians were dealt!

Exit Juliana, Marta and Chinchinero.

DIOCLETIAN
 Legionnaire, I salute you.

SEBASTIAN
 Oh, holy one...

DIOCLETIAN
 You need not bend your knee,
 nor kiss the fringe of my robe.

SEBASTIAN (*Stands up*)
 Lord, may the heavens grant you a long life!

DIOCLETIAN (*Laughs*)
 So be it! Because the higher you rise

the more your existence in danger is.
 Power, Sebastian, gained with violence,
 with violence be lost!
 But, enough! the Empire is in peace.
 Tonight, you will share supper with me.

SEBASTIAN

But My Lord... I am not your equal!

DIOCLETIAN

Does my sanctuary intimidate you?
 Like loot from war, we bring captive
 exotic gods from the conquered nations.

SEBASTIAN

The emperor doesn't honor the gods of Rome?

DIOCLETIAN

They provide little consolation, and no hope.
 Enjoy, my son, the pleasure that life grants,
 because, beyond death, nothing lies.
 Drink from my cup: the August invites you.

SEBASTIAN

You must forgive me: my life is frugal.

DIOCLETIAN

Beware! You behave like Christians:
 they fear pleasure, they fear richness,
 "easier a camel -his doctrine preaches-
 can pass through the eye of a needle, before
 a rich man can enter the kingdom of heaven".
 What happens, upon entering that kingdom?

SEBASTIAN

At the end of the times, we shall be judged.

DIOCLETIAN (*Smiles*)

Judged... by whom?

SEBASTIAN
By the god of the Christians.

DIOCLETIAN
What this god inspires -I heard- is fear!

SEBASTIAN
He sent to this world, his son Jesus Christ,
to teach men, love.

DIOCLETIAN (*Cunning*)
Do you love me, Sebastian?

SEBASTIAN
Yes, My Lord. You and all those who serve you.

DIOCLETIAN
I, who am not a Christian, feel love for you,
who serve me!

SEBASTIAN
(*Pointing outside*) And for him, your slave?

DIOCLETIAN
No. Am I, therefore, a cruel man?

SEBASTIAN (*Timidly*)
He who is served... ignores the sufferings
of those who are forced to serve him.

DIOCLETIAN (*Exclaims*)
And I? Am I not always serving you?
I was "forced", Sebastian, to make war.
For the glory of Rome, I conquered lands,
with "sufferings". And "forced" was I,
to straight out what was crooked at the Empire.
I built my beautiful city of Nicomedia
monuments, and squares, to serve Rome!
What would this god reproach Diocletian?
Or will he condemn me for living in luxury?

SEBASTIAN (*Murmurs*)

Oh, sacred One...

DIOCLETIAN

Speak, Sebastian!

SEBASTIAN

Your jewelry, your crown, you wear them
without thinking the price it cost
to the miserable slave who seeks each gem...
And for your embroidered robe, My Lord,
how many sleepless nights! So much blood
for the rich loot you've brought from war.
So much punishment, so much suffering,
to wear on your finger... an emerald!

DIOCLETIAN

Enough! Now, in everything that surrounds me
(*Sardonic*)...I will see hard work and fatigue.
You are courageous to remind me, Sebastian,
that those who serve, are never served.
(*Calling, looking out-stage*)
Slave! Have supper with me. It's an order.
No, I beg you... (*Pointing*) See? he vanished.

SEBASTIAN

For such a crime, he may lose his life.

DIOCLETIAN

That's the way it is, Sebastian.
So, what is the purpose of your speech?
Do you want the Emperor to sign an edict
ordering the rivers to change their course,
the lion to become tame and the lamb fierce?

SEBASTIAN

No, My Lord. But you can sign an edict
to stop the persecution of the Christians.

DIOCLETIAN (*Serious*)

What one edict says, no other can retract.

But if you have a friend in the dungeons
I will pardon him, if you prove his innocence.

SEBASTIAN

Of innocents, your jails are full!
I am speaking, sir, of justice. Not of mercy.

DIOCLETIAN

Slow!... There is arrogance in your voice.
I delegated this issue to Cesar Galerious.

SEBASTIAN

He is unjust and cruel with the Christians...

DIOCLETIAN

And they, Sebastian, are rebels. And impious!
The teaching of the one they call "Jesus"
has endangered the peace of the Empire.
(Change to melancholy)
Get away from Christians, get closer to me.
I need your love, Sebastian, because today
I'll make you, Captain of my Praetorian Guard!

SEBASTIAN

But, sir, I... *(Goes back)*

DIOCLETIAN

Come! Bend your knee. *(Pause)* Do as I say.
(Sebastian hesitates, and then obeys.)
(Diocletian touches his shoulder:)
More than Captain of my Guard, Sebastian,
I name you: my son, and my faithful friend!

*The light dims with them remaining immobile,
returning to the stillness of the stamp, as
in the beginning.*

INCIDENTAL MUSIC

SCENE 2

Subdued light on the "workshop" area, where is basket.

Marta and Magdalena (with sunglasses) are laying out the costumes.

Alejandro (as Diocletian), taking off his wig, walks toward them. Seeing him, Magdalena leaves. Marta is leafing throw a book.

ALEJANDRO

(Looking at Magdalena) Is she still mute? (She assents. He takes the book) Roman history...

MARTA

I marked something on Diocletian. (She sits down to sew her tunic)

ALEJANDRO

(Reading) Diocletian established an iron military bureaucracy: he undertook reforms to beat economic crisis. Over the "junta" he maintains absolute power. (Looking at Marta) Did you know that Diocletian had a Christian daughter? (She is absent) Marta... you are not listening.

MARTA

Yes, Alejandro. That's probably why Sebastian hoped to convert him.

ALEJANDRO

According to Gringberg, the measures adopted by Cesar Galerios, were a cold and methodically calculated to exterminate the Christians. Because they had come to form a power within the State. (Looks at her, she is still absent minded) Marta, you are not listening.

MARTA

(Smiles sweetly at him) Yes, Alejandro.

ALEJANDRO

...I love you. *(She stares at him.)* I remind you of my brother Federico, don't I?

MARTA

Yes. You look very much like him.

ALEJANDRO

But I am not him, Marta. You look without seeing, you listen without hearing. As if you were not entirely real.

MARTA

Then, we are equal... we both love someone who barely exists.

ALEJANDRO

Federico "barely" exists? He does. Much more than me.

MARTA

He used to say: "he who gives his life for an ideal, is not dead... he is only absent."

ALEJANDRO

But my brother is not "absent", Marta. *(Pause)* You have the gift of reviving the past. As if you were recovering it, for the present. Federico was an exceptional person, but he is no longer with us. *(She stares at him)* Well, I mean... even though he is on the list of "arrested-disappeared", he will not return. *(A silence)* You know that, don't you? Then, it's time to think... about your future life. I mean, I hope you would, because... *(Stops talking)*

MARTA

Because?

ALEJANDRO

Because I love you.

MARTA

Yes... You have already said it. I'm sorry, Alejandro. *(She smiles at him)*

While they talk, both prepare themselves for the next roman episode.

ALEJANDRO

"I'm sorry, Alejandro"... *(Picks up the book, upset. Starts reading:)* "In the year 313, Cesar Galerious is struck by a terrible pain. Fearing punishments from the Christian's God, he makes peace with them. Then, they are seen coming out of prisons and catacombs, like an army of ghosts. But, little by little, they gather strength. They start singing their hymns, and they walk around in circles of light..." *(Sets the book down. Dreamy)* Our Sebastian didn't see his hope fulfilled.

MARTA

Neither did Federico... It's not fair. His faith was so strong!

ALEJANDRO

Don't be sad. *(A silence)* Marta, what made you join us?

MARTA

(Timidly) Well, simply...

ALEJANDRO

Tell me.

MARTA

I can't stand children begging.

ALEJANDRO

Right. We are always shuffling ideas, instructions, slogans, big talk... and forget about the essential things. Children begging. Why not? Injustice has many names. In the Caribbean there are 12 year-old

MARTA

(In a quiet voice) No more torture.

ALEJANDRO

When we were in prison, Federico told me: "What distresses you, is not so much the physical pain, but the cruelty of your torturers."

MARTA

Until when, Alejandro! Until when shall we have death, persecution?

ALEJANDRO

(Cheering her) Marta, we don't know a thing about the future! Could be a bomb, it explodes and it's over! But, it could also be the opposite...

MARTA

What is the "opposite"?

ALEJANDRO

Men have always believed in great values, I mean, moral values, haven't they?

MARTA

(Adjusting her rag pony) I suppose so.

ALEJANDRO

It's not impossible that one day men will decide to put them to practice! Or, let us count on a "hope of galaxies", as Federico used to say.... Travellers from other worlds, will come to help us back to common sense! Let's dream, Marta. Who's to say that our children won't start training, and will run morning races in the parks... And exercise daily to become the best? Imagine, Marta: a great championship, a world championship, to put an end to injustice!

He looks at Marta who is wearing the rag pony, he gets close to her.

ALEJANDRO

No, not the pony. Now you will be the "centurion" Torcuato.

(With much tenderness, he helps her taking off the pony, hands her the chains for the centurion. Puts them, over her wrists)

ALEJANDRO

Marta, my sweet, I would marry you, even knowing that you can only love Federico *(Marta starts a gesture of protest)* ...to take care of you, see what I mean?

The light dims, while they go over to the platform where is the altarpiece, wearing their masks.

Blackout, the Gavotte starts.

Brilliant light on the altarpiece.

EPISODE 2 OF THE ALTARPIECE

On the platform of the altarpiece are the PROCONSUL, and TORCUATO, (Marta) short tunic and chains, as she were hanging in torture. (A curtain with torture instrument on the side) The Proconsul has a parchment. Juliana enters with the banner and the Chinchinero, and perform a brief choreography.

JULIANA Diocletian sent by edict
Torcuato, saintly man
in a judgement of terror:
he is punished by the Romans
with refined means of torture.
They bleed the heart

They leave, spinning. Proconsul and Torcuato come to life.

PROCONSUL

On this day, the 8th of the month of April, before me, the Proconsul, a centurion accused of committing actions punished by the law, is introduced to this honorable Court. Identify yourself!

TORCUATO

Christian.

PROCONSUL

Impious word! Say your name.

TORCUATO

Christian.

PROCONSUL

Snack him on the mouth so that he won't respond one thing for another. (*Symbol of torture*)

TORCUATO

Christian is the name I hold as mine. But, my parents called me Torcuato.

PROCONSUL

It is written in these writing confiscated from you: (*Reads from a parchment*) "The Princes of the Priests reunited in Council said: What shall we do with this man named Jesus? He does a lot of wonders. If we continue to let him preach his doctrine, the whole nation will believe in him"

To Torcuato) Don't you know that those who hide such writings, are punished by death? The imperial proclamation says: "The secret Christian assemblies and the possession of writings that refer to their impious doctrine are prohibited". (*Pause*) Did you know the proclamation?

TORCUATO

Yes, I did.

PROCONSUL

You tore the military insignia, and you disposed of your arms!

TORCUATO

My doctrine says: "Thou shall not kill".

PROCONSUL

Your crime is high treason!... Jesus was a rebel who pretended to rise the Jews against the Romans; your duty was to turn these writings to be burned.

TORCUATO

Burn me first!

PROCONSUL

Torture him! (*Symbol of torture*) Enough! To whom did you read these writings?

TORCUATO

To my brothers in the Christian faith.

PROCONSUL

Turn in your brothers, and I'll let you free!

TORCUATO

I am not an informer.

PROCONSUL

Put him on the rack until he tells us all their names! (*Symbols of torture*) Enough! Torcuato, I, officially instruct you to do a sacrifice to Jupiter, as the emperors do.

TORCUATO

The emperors are wrong.

PROCONSUL

Burn his feet and hands for blasphemy!

TORCUATO

Why do you torture me so? I only praise the true God!

PROCONSUL

Pour salt on his wounds for saying *god* and not *gods*!
Torcuato, knowing that they will go on tormenting you,
do you still persist in what you have said?

TORCUATO

I persist.

PROCONSUL

Fool Christian. Do you love death?

TORCUATO

I love life. But I do not fear death.

PROCONSUL

(Yelling) Scrape his ribs with sharp shells!
Hang him from his feet and put him over the fire!
But do not let him die!

(Symbol of torture continues. Torcuato
bents in pain.)

I will force you to waste away slowly... before I
have you beheaded! And do not expect posthumous
glory: I won't allow those whores to come and cover
you with balsams, and give you an honorable burial.
Your remains will be thrown where they won't find
them! You damned Christians! (*Torcuato is lying on
the floor*) Take him back to the dungeons!

DARKNESS. BRIEF MUSIC

SCENE 3

*Light to front sector, "the square".
Woman 2 is there, with a basket of goods.
Woman 1 approaches. She crosses the scene,
carrying a bundle.
Woman 2 sits on the floor, Woman 1 on the
bundle, and looks around as if she were
waiting for the bus.*

WOMAN 1

I was taking goods and clothing to the prisoners at the jail of Concepcion, but I came back with everything!

WOMAN 2

Why?

WOMAN 1

Guard Gonzalez kicked me out "for talking such nonsense", he said.

WOMAN 2

I see. And what did you tell him?

WOMAN 1

I asked him, how he could work in those places, where they mistreat innocent young people. And he said: "They are not innocent. And even though this job is ugly, someone's got to do it."

WOMAN 2

And what did you answer?

WOMAN 1

"If the job is ugly, look for another one." And he: "With so much unemployment? Besides, wearing a uniform, my children will never lack anything." So, I asked him: "And if they take one of your children and starve him, what will you do?"

WOMAN 2

And he?...

WOMAN 1

"I'll kill them, he said, even if they execute me afterward". "You see, said I, that's the difference: you grieve over your children, and those you have arrested, grieve for everybody's children!"

"You think so?" he laughs, making fun of me. And I: "Don't you know that those young people are fighting so that every child can get food and education? And shoes. Shoes are important to the children." So I told him.

WOMAN 2

And what did he say?

WOMAN 1

"All you talk is about children, he said. This is a war between grown ups, and children have nothing to do with it".

WOMAN 2

Oh, hear that!

WOMAN 1

"Children are involved, I said, since we all start life as children. And it's no good to start it hungry, barefoot, sleeping on doorways and taking drugs." (*Looking out-stage*) The Bus. There's my bus. (*Gets up*) Lets' see it this time the guard let me in.

She leaves, followed by Woman 2.

BLACKOUT

The Gavotte announces the next episode:

LIGHT ON THE ALTARPIECE:

SCENE 4

*Torcuato is imprisoned, chained.
Hanging from above is a golden angel.
Juliana and Chinchinero perform their
brief choreography.*

JULIANA Sebastian, pious soul,
suffered when he saw
in the dark of the dungeons
his Christian brothers tortured...

Alejandro enters and stops her:

ALEJANDRO

Wait, Eduardo is missing!

*Juliana leaves. Enter Eduardo (as Sebastian),
holding the script of the play in his hand.
Marta descends from the platform.*

EDUARDO

(Upset, reads for them in the script:) "Turn in your
brothers and I will let you free..." I never told of
Federico! I gave some false addresses, and then a real
one, according to what we agreed!

He looks at them, depressed.

MARTA

Eduardo, what are you talking about?

EDUARDO

About torture! You can stand the electric shock,
the blows, everything, but not suffocation! Alejan-
dro, when you wrote this play, *(shows the script)*
you forgot "suffocation" in the torture scene!

ALEJANDRO

Calm down, Eduardo.

MARTA

No one has ever said that you turned him in!

EDUARDO

(Without hearing them) I shouldn't be here playing the part of the hero! Federico would have done it better: he never opened his mouth.

ALEJANDRO

But, listen...

EDUARDO

And don't tell me that I am not to blame!

MARTA

Blame for what?

EDUARDO

(Shows them the script) And here's another speech about those who deny their faith: "they curse their weakness and are never able to find peace". Did you have me in mind?

ALEJANDRO

Eduardo, that was written in the Third Century!

EDUARDO

(After a silence) Okay. Don't worry. Let's go on with the rehearsal. And on with my part of the hero... the fantastic guy. *(Goes to platform)*

MARTA

(Stops him) Listen: all this time you were in exile, you have been tormenting yourself for no reason. The agreement, Eduardo, was to wait two days before... "talking".

EDUARDO

(Cutting) I waited less than that!

MARTA

Wait as long "as you can", is the same thing.

EDUARDO

It's not the same thing!

MARTA

It's not possible to judge what someone can or can not stand in torture. And no one has the right to judge his behavior.

EDUARDO

Except for "the one who was tortured".

ALEJANDRO

Enough, Eduardo. You have nothing to do with what happened to my brother. You have to believe it, there is no proof...

EDUARDO

Then, who's fault was it?

MARTA

(Stands between them) I know!

EDUARDO

You say that to give me back peace, Marta.

ALEJANDRO

What do you mean: "you know whose fault it was?"

MARTA

There you are, you two, blaming and forgiving yourselves! When the only ones to blame are those who torture and kill. "Guilty are those who persecute, as if man's hope to live in justice and dignity, were the worst crime. Isn't that line also in your play, Alejandro?

Eduardo, changing his attitude, hugs Marta, approaches Alejandro, affectionately. They keep silence for a moment.

EDUARDO

Come on, "Torcuato" put on your chains. *(Helps her with)* Where is Juliana? Come on! The scene of the prison begins again.

Juliana comes in with the pony and the banner, Marta and Eduardo go to the platform. Lights go out. Beats of the Gavotte.

EPISODE 3 OF THE ALTARPIECE

Choreography with Juliana and the Chinchinero. The music stops.

JULIANA Sebastian, pious soul
suffered when he saw
in the darkness of the dungeons
his Christian brothers tortured.
So, outwitting the guards,
cautiously, secretly,
the prisoners he visited,
smoothing their pains,
giving them consolation
true love and prayers.

Exit with Chinchinero. Torcuato and Sebastian in altarpiece come to life. Torcuato, chained, is lying down.

TORCUATO

(Exclaims) A captain of the Emperor's Guard!
What do you want?

SEBASTIAN

To comfort you, my brother.

TORCUATO

Brother?

SEBASTIAN

I only wear the soldier's uniform, to help my Christian brothers. You were courageous.

TORCUATO

There is light in your face!

SEBASTIAN

It is your soul, that brightens the dark.

TORCUATO

What will become of me?

SEBASTIAN

Tomorrow you will be interrogated once more.

TORCUATO

I won't be able to resist! What's your name?

SEBASTIAN

Sebastian.

TORCUATO

Sebastian, my brother, with your sword, kill me!

SEBASTIAN

I came to give you life. Say the Scriptures with me:
"May your heart not worry, nor get frightened, as
I will not abandon you..."

TORCUATO

... "Because, no one has a greater love than this
one, which is to risk your life for your brothers."
I no longer feel the weight of my chains! Your
strength fortifies me! (*Straights up, smiling*)

SEBASTIAN

Repeat with me: "If they have persecuted me, they
will persecute you".

TORCUATO

"They will persecute you..."

SEBASTIAN

..."but if they have kept my word, they will also keep yours..."

BRIEF MUSIC.

*Lights in front stage. Marta, taking off chains and mask, sits on her heels.
Light remains over her. Eduardo leaves.*

SCENE 5

MARTA

"If they have kept my word, they will keep yours." Your words, Federico. *(Takes a letter out of her clothes and reads:)* "Marta, my sweet, don't be sad. Don't remember me in blood and pain. There is so much light between the walls of a dungeon! Being close to death, you learn the meaning of life..."

(She puts down the letter, and murmurs:)

After midnight, I think of you, Federico... But, thinking it's not only just that. I am pulling the threads of my memories of you, and suddenly, you are there! Your presence, once again, overcomes me. You are so real... as if you had never died! Perhaps, because is a delusion, the bond is even stronger, the bond that ties me to you.

(She continues reading the letter.)

"... you learn the meaning of life, and you love it so much! The words you pronounce in dungeon, move around and go from cell to cell. And they escape from the prison's walls, through secret ways, until

they reach our people. Nothing is lost, neither the great gestures, nor the small sacrifices. And now, let me tell you that I did well. I'm talking about the "dark tunnel of torture". Marta, I am still alive... if you can call "life" this vegetating. And what I am now saying, perhaps, will reach you one day..." *(Looking up, as if she could feel his presence)* No. You are not dead. I suppose you walk somewhere in a distant country. So far away... Or perhaps, so close to me, that I can touch you!

(She remains quiet. A very delicate incidental music is heard. Alejandro enters from behind. She perceives him without turning around. She renews the reading:)

MARTA

"I crossed the last threshold, Marta, and my lips didn't open... You know why? Because the only word I wanted to say, that I should have yelled at them, was not in my memory!"

Still kneeling, she faints, with tears in her eyes, looking the letter.

Brief incidental music, as Alejandro behind her, leans over to pick up the letter from her hand.

ALEJANDRO

(Reading the letter) "...Because when they stick knives on your flesh, when you are not more than a bleeding wound, then, you look desperately for a word... The word that contains the reason of your fight and sacrifice. It should be a simple word, but stronger than hate. Sharp as lightning, as the blade of a sword, capable of ending all injustice, and all cruelties! It exists, right? My sweet, look for that word. Please! I suppose it's written

in the galaxies, from where they must be looking at us, with infinite compassion."

He gives back the letter to Marta.

Brief incidental music.

MARTA

(Getting up) He was always talking about the galaxies.

ALEJANDRO

(Smiling at her) He should be there, now.

MARTA

Then, he must have already found that word.

ALEJANDRO

Do you know that word, Marta?

MARTA

No. I don't.

ALEJANDRO

(As he puts on the robe of Diocletian) Yes, you do. *(With tenderness)* The word is LOVE.

MARTA

Are you sure? *(He agrees, silently)* Why?

ALEJANDRO

...Because "love", was the only thing, those men that were torturing him, DIDN'T have!

They stay quiet, looking at each other, while the light dims until dark.

The happy music of the Gavotte is heard.

EPISODE 4 OF THE ALTARPIECE

Enter Juliana (with pony) and chinchinero.

JULIANA In the time of Diocletian
the Christians, without restrain
were persecuted by the Romans
but they stood by their faith.
A Tribune defending them
to Caesar has upheld them.
Caesar responds with hate,
forgiveness knows he not!
Speaking out against death
a Tribune lost his life!

*Exit Juliana and Chinchinero. Diocletian,
Tribune and Galerious, at the altarpiece.*

DIOCLETIAN

You are here Galerious, to accuse the Christians.
The Tribune to defend them... Galerious, speak!

GALERIOUS

Sir, the actions of this sect are such
that they are calling people to anarchy!
They preach that all men are equal,
that wealth is a vice, poverty a virtue,
and they condemn slavery... as most unjust!
In sum, they are like an internal enemy,
hidden and tame, for that, more dangerous.
They have already invaded the Gaul,
The Oriental provinces and Cartage. In Rome
they have mined the ground we step on:
like moles, they excavate their catacombs!
You should attack the very heart of their sect
or soon... a Christian will rule the Empire.
Be careful Sir: every where you'll find them!
Even in your palace. And, very close to you...

DOCLETIAN

Galerious... you better speak wisely and slowly:
If you accuse someone, do not mistreat my trust.

GALERIOUS

May the gods keep me from talking false, my Lord.
Someone else abuses of your trust. Watch out!

DIOCLETIAN

(After a silence, upset:) Speak, Tribune.

TRIBUNES

I remind you, Sacred One,
that in the times of Nero, the Roman people
used to clamor: send the Christian to the beasts!
They were killed with no trial and no sanction,
only to amuse the people with their blood.
And why were they persecuted and condemned?
Because their refused to worship our gods!
These gods in which no one believes anymore,
these gods who fight, devour and kill each other
and, for the beauty of a queen, went to war!
The moral strength of the persecuted Christians
is any harmful to the people of Rome,
it's rather a benefit to them, Mylord!

GALERIOUS *(Sardonic)*

Tribune, what is it that you call, moral strength?

TRIBUNES

In other times, Sir, in the circus arena,
when Christians were delivered to the lions
the lions stayed still, without harming them!

GALERIOUS *(Accusing him)*

He admires the Christians!

TRIBUNES

Must I die for that?

GALERIOUS

We do not condemn without a trial.

TRIBUNES

I protest!

Christians are not judged in places of justice: as it is with the robbers, or to the criminals to them, the laws of Rome, are never applied!

GALERIOUS

Criminals are innocent compared with those who attempted to set fire to the Imperial Palace, and desecrate the temple our goddess Juno!

TRIBUNES

Calumny! Guilty is he, who sends his slaves to undertake such low misdeeds, with the purpose of arousing the Roman people against the Christians!

DIOCLETIAN

Can you prove it, Tribune?

TRIBUNES

No, Sir, I can not:

Is there anyone, who can prove the misdeeds of those who are so highly placed in Rome? And if there were, pardon me, my lord, always, someone placed higher will cover, their actions!

GALERIOUS

Stop him, Diocletian: he is insulting us!

TRIBUNES

And nothing can justify the cruel punishments! Who is able to resist the power of your legions? Ten thousand innocent people have been massacred, because thy refused to adore your gods! I ask you, is it to say Christians, to say murderers? Now, before you, I accuse Caesar Galerious to blame the Christians, for what he has done!

DIOCLETIAN

(Troublesome) Answer, Galerious.

GALERIOUS

Even if it were so,
 disobedience, Sir, to your proclamations,
 is enough reason to be condemned to death!
 And for his words, equal sentence he deserves!

DIOCLETIAN

That is his request. In a few words, say yours,
 Tribune.

TRIBUNE

In a few words, no more tortures, no more death.
 You're persecuting innocence, justice, dignity.
 Allow me to press for mercy as I leave!
(Makes a motion to leave.)

GALERIOUS

Stop him! he reveals himself : he's a Christian!
 My Guards! arrest the Tribune before he escapes!
(Moves back to go, Diocletian stops him)

DIOCLETIAN

Galerious: who is this one I have to watch out?

GALERIOUS *(Defiant)*

One, my lord... that should be watching over you!

THE ACTION FREEZES. BRIEF MUSIC. DARK.

END OF THE FIRST PART

PART TWO

SCENE 6

*All the actors are on stage.
Men are working at the altarpiece. They
hang the golden angel and fix some bars
to hang -in later scenes- the sackcloths
that illustrate the life of S. Sebastian.
Juliana has a basket full of flowers and
candles. Magdlena and Marta, in a corner,
are bussy with the rag pony and cloth. In
another group, (front stage), the mothers
are working, sawing a large "arpillera",
(sort of a "patch work").*

CHINCHINERO

Did you know, Alejandro, that the statue of the
saint we worship here, was almost burned? About the
end of the last century, some "perverted" young men
wanted to desecrate it.

ALEJANDRO

How did it happen?

CHINCHINERO

Upset with so much devotion, they stole the statue
from the altar. Near the river, they tried to burn it,
but they could not: the ancient wood was like stone!
So they buried it in the sand, just like the Spanish
Captain had done, long ago.

JULIANA

People were desperately looking for the Saint. Finally, a
little shepherd found it.

ALEJANDRO

So, the statue of the Saint was twice buried and unburied... It is strange: because in Rome, the body of Sebastian was hidden after his martyrdom, but then, two saints women find him, and gave him a Christian burial in the catacombs.

JULIANA

Same as the nineteen workers arrested near Yumbel, who were twice buried and unburied.

CHINCHINERO

First in a pine wood, where the cops shot them. After a while, dogs started digging there, so they took them to Yumbel's cemetery. And there they stayed... (As he exit with Alejandro and Eduardo) ... for six years, nameless, not a cross to mark their graves!

Light goes to the 4 Mothers:

MOTHER 1

"Six years, nameless, no crosses..."

MOTHER 2

Six years during which, we still had some hope.

MOTHER 3

It was tragic to find them like that...

MOTHER 4

But, finally could give them a Christian burial...

MOTHER 1

That comforted us.

Brief incidental music from a cello.

MOTHER 3

Many women have not found their relatives yet, and they still hope to see them alive.

MOTHER 1

"They took them alive, alive we want them back"...
so they say in other countries.

MOTHER 2

In other countries?

MOTHER 1

People have disappeared in Argentina, Uruguay, Salvador, Guatemala... all over Latin America.

MOTHER 4

The mothers of the Plaza Mayo, in Buenos Aires, have written their names in posters and claim them.

Cello's incidental music

MOTHER 2

I ask for justice, for six years we have lived in deceit!

MOTHER 3

I pray God for the children of those who shot my son, so that they will not suffer for their parent's sins.

MOTHER 4

When my husband didn't come back, I looked for him at the Police Station. There I found out he was a leader and was fighting with the Union.

MOTHER 3

I also went to the Police Station, but he was no longer there. They had "transferred him", they said, to the barracks, in Temuco. I went to the barracks. "See, his name is not on the list", they told me. "Look closer -I asked them- he must be here." "Come on, lady, get out..." They bullied me, so, I had to leave.

MOTHER 2

I went to Concepcion, from there, to Talcahuano ...
I went everywhere!

MOTHER 4

I presented all the legal documents. I did everything they advised me to do. During six years I searched for my son...

*Cello's incidental music, while they work
in silence.*

MOTHER 2

I knew my husband was dead, because I saw him in my dreams; "Why are you looking for me so far away -he would say-: I am here, with you". (Pause) The day we buried them, I saw him once more in my dreams. He touched my face kindly, and said: "Take care of my children". I woke up crying, and shouted to him: "Here we are, your children... and I, missing you so much!"

MOTHER 3

I didn't have any trouble recognizing him: "Watch calmly", the doctor told me. Suddenly I saw his dentures! No, I didn't have any trouble... (Stays still, looking in front of her, dreamy.)

Notes of the cello's incidental music.

MOTHER 2

During the trial, the same ones who arrested them, denied everything, in front of us!

MOTHER 4

We could perfectly identify them.

MOTHER 3

But they were calm. They knew beforehand that they could be granted amnesty... However, it was a

consolation to hear the truth, publicly, right there, in the Courts of Justice! *(They leave)*

Incidental music for separation.

Eduardo enters. He start folding the large sackcloth left by the Mothers.

EDUARDO

Magdalena, can you give me a hand?

MAGDALENA

Sure. *(Goes towards him)*

EDUARDO

Why the sunglasses? Eye sight problems?

She helps him to fold the cloth, silently. Finally answers, with a full voice:

MAGDALENA

"Over there" I was in the dark. They covered my head with a hood. *(As Eduardo stares at her)* There, in the prisoner's camp. I feel like... I'm still in the dark.

MARTA

Magdalena, since you've been working with us, it is the first time you mention you were in prison.

EDUARDO

You better talk about, it helps.

MAGDALENA

Talk about... *(Stares at them)*

EDUARDO

The military coup in Argentina.

She hesitates. After a silence:

MAGDALENA

(As if it didn't concern her, with impersonal voices:)
 March 1976: We noticed a very obvious change of policy.
 A total change. You always heard the slogans: The security of the Nation. The Nation's order. We have to save this country from chaos, from foreigners doctrines. Repeated until you are fed up. *(Pause)* There was a sound of innocence in the "media", you want to believe them. We thought nothing would happen to us, even though we were seeing crimes and impunity...

Juliana enters, she stops talking.

JULIANA

Marta, Eduardo, we start! "Fifth Episode".

*Magdalena leaves with Eduardo and Marta.
 Sebastian, chained, goes to the platform.
 Diocletian with a long cape, enters and goes toward him.
 Strong light on the altarpiece: the golden angel is hanging in Sebastian side.*

*Juliana, Marta with pony, and Chinchinero.
 Brief choreography. Music stops.*

JULIANA See Sebastian in chains:
 being accused of treason
 he is taken to prison
 and sentenced to death.
 Diocletian visits him
 and he begs him with fervor
 to renounce his beliefs.
 "You are in danger this time!
 If they kill you, Sebastian,
 ... the suffering will be mine!"

*Exit Chinchinero, Juliana and Marta.
 Diocletian and Sebastian come to life.*

DIOCLETIAN The Captain of my guard
has been accused of treason!

SEBASTIAN To be a Christian is not
the worst of all the crimes?

DIOCLETIAN You have visited the dungeons
and encouraged your brothers
to reject our gods!

SEBASTIAN And you came to this dungeon,
to have me renounce mine!

DIOCLETIAN With danger, in the dark,
I came here like a thief...

SEBASTIAN You ordered my chains.
What does Diocletian want?

DIOCLETIAN Hear the truth, from your lips!

SEBASTIAN What you heard, is no lie.

DIOCLETIAN You were my favorite one,
I loved you, as a son!

SEBASTIAN You knew I was a Christian
with duties to fulfill.

DIOCLETIAN A Captain of the Guard
the Emperor should serve!

SEBASTIAN I do not serve him, who sends
my Christian brothers to death!

DIOCLETIAN I bestowed upon you, favors:
the greatest one, my friendship!

SEBASTIAN Sir, I'm indebted to you.

DIOCLETIAN Your cannot offend your God
if only you pretend
to sacrifice to ours:
I beseech you, Sebastian,
do it... do it for me!
Many who have done so,
their freedom have won.

SEBASTIAN For that, they curse their weakness
and they never find peace.
Stop persecuting them!
That's what the Romans want.
Planting death on the fields
you do not give them life!
Not in hate, but in love

you will find the true peace.
 Proclaim in your decrees:
 "NO to death... YES, to life!"

DIOCLETIAN (Angry) Our law is our law,
 I don't know a better one!
 The Empire owes its grandeur,
 to the courage of its legions
 not to peace, but to war
 and to our Code of Honor!

SEBASTIAN I know ONE, wit no sword,
 that the crowds will name Lord.
 He came to earth to show us
 the way of our salvation

DIOCLETIAN If you refer to the one,
 that they call Jesus Christ,
 he couldn't save himself
 from being crucified!

SEBASTIAN His word is still alive,
 his word brought us the light!

DIOCLETIAN (Tired) What could I do with you?

SEBASTIAN Make me die on the cross
 and thus, save the Empire.

DIOCLETIAN Stop making fun of me!

SEBASTIAN Didn't you send your archers
 to take away my life?

DIOCLETIAN If you are hurt by their arrows
 all the pain will be mine!
 What reason have I
 to order your death?

SEBASTIAN Because of my beliefs,
 I give my life:
 Executioners ignore
 why they send us to death!

DIOCLETIAN (Hurt) "Executioner", you said?
 for calling me that name
 consider yourself lost!

SEBASTIAN He who speaks through my lips,
 has greater power than you.

DIOCLETIAN You have signed your sentence!
 I challenge that powerful God

to save you from martyrdom.
 Archers, stretch your bows tight:
 The Captain of the Guards
 for his treason, shall die!

LIGHT GOES OUT
 BRIEF INCIDENTAL MUSIC

SCENE 7

Magdalena, (with sunglasses) is sitting still on a bench. She gives her testimony with an impersonal voice:

MAGDALENA

They arrested me in Buenos Aires, on April 1977.
 I was two months pregnant. The same day, my husband
 was arrested in the street. I was kidnaped from my
 place with violence. At the prison's camp, they were
 always screaming at me, forcing me to run in all
 directions, blindfolded, making me crash against the
 walls. For five days, they kept me tied to my husband,
 both supporting electrical shocks. I was harassed...
 tortured... raped... (1)

Brief incidental dramatic music.

*The story of the martyrdom of Sebastian
 develops at the altarpiece alternating with
 Magdalena's testimony: at the altarpiece,
 the mothers will hang sackclothes that il-
 lustrate the stanzas Juliana is reciting.
 The first is "Sebastian tied to a tree"*

(1) Fragments taken from a written testimony of an Argentine woman.

JULIANA The order to his archers
 Diocletian, gives, in pain:
 "Tie him to a tree"
 he, who once, was my Captain!

Beats of incidental music.

MAGDALENA
 A year later, they transferred my husband. To "transfer" was a synonym for death. It meant being led to a well of lime, to be shot... and buried inside. They transferred him along with sixteen other prisoners, who are, since then, on the lists of the so called... "arrested and missing".

Beats of incidental music.
The second sackcloth is hang: "the seven archers".

JULIANA At the emperor command
 his seven fiercest archers
 threw without mercy their arrows
 to take away his life!

Beats of incidental music.

MAGDALENA
 Shortly after my release, my son was born. Soon I'll have to explain to him, that his father was kidnapped in his own country, his native land: his only crime was to fight for justice, For a better way of life.

Beats of incidental music.

JULIANA Seven arrows were thrown:
 in Sebastian sacred breast,
 instead of seven wounds
 seven stars were lighted!

In central arch, mothers hang the third sackcloth: Sebastian's image with the 7 lights. Beats of incidental music.

MAGDALENA

When you enter a clandestine jail, you find yourself deprived of all defenses. It means to be flung to an abyss. But to suffer the agony of waiting for torture and death, day after day, is less hard... if you know with certitude which are your ideals and your hopes!

The mothers approach Magdalena, who has just taken off her sunglasses. They leave the stage with her.

EPISODE 6 OF THE ALTARPIECE

Sebastian, with a white tunic and hood, is sitting on the edge of the platform. Diocletian, with a purple robe and tiara, comes and step up the platform. The sack-clothes remind there, and Juliana comes down to recite the stanzas:

JULIANA And lying on that orchard
they saw him badly wounded
pierced by seven arrows,
the seven archers left.
Two saintly Christian women
to this orchard arrived,
and kindly healed his wounds:
the saint comes back to life!
Then he goes to Diocletian
for his brothers, he pleads.

*Juliana exit, they come to life.
Sebastian raises his hood.*

DIOCLETIAN

Sebastian! I ordered you death!

SEBASTIAN

And you challenged my God to preserve my life.

DIOCLETIAN

What a witchcraft did you perform? With your preaching you turned my archers into cowards! They will pay for their disobedience!

SEBASTIAN

They carried out your orders. See my scars.

DIOCLETIAN

(Looks, as he opens his cape) For all gods... Who was able to cure in such a way incurable wounds?

SEBASTIAN

Two saintly women... Don't blame your archers, they have left me for dead.

DIOCLETIAN

If your God can save you from death, why doesn't he turn me into a slave, or into a Christian, and thus, avoid you so much trouble?

SEBASTIAN

You will see the light... only if you want to see it. Free is the will of a man.

DIOCLETIAN

Not your will, Sebastian: you came to me... sent by your god.

SEBASTIAN

I'm his servant. But I freely chose whom I wanted to serve. Faith in their beliefs, doesn't enslave men. And you too, you are free to decide, if a Christian should live... or should die!

DIOCLETIAN

Enough! (Pause) I will not listen to you anymore!
Why did you come to my palace?

SEBASTIAN

To plead for my persecuted brothers. And... to save
you, Diocletian.

DIOCLETIAN

To save me? Why?

SEBASTIAN

Because I gave you my love.

DIOCLETIAN

And because of this love I gave you, Sebastian, must
I sign your death sentence, twice? (They look at each
other in silence) Will your God save you once more?

SEBASTIAN

Diocletian, you will not see me again... Grant your
forgiveness, I pray you! We have had enough of this
unjust persecution. Do it, or your days to come will
be unbearable.

DIOCLETIAN

Can you predict the future and read the stars like the
fortunetellers? What do you see in my days to come?

SEBASTIAN

Grief and sorrow. Galerious will betray you.

DIOCLETIAN

Galerious will be my successor. Why stain himself with
my blood?

SEBASTIAN

Not yours, but from your lineage. And before dying, you
will see the fall of what you built with love: the Empire.

DIOCLETIAN

You lie, Sebastian! All my deeds will remain in the memory of mankind. They will praise my name!

SEBASTIAN

They will curse your name, Diocletian, for persecuting the Christians.

DIOCLETIAN

None of them will be left on earth to curse my name!

SEBASTIAN

(As illuminated:) There will be thousands and thousands... I can see them coming out of the dungeons and catacombs, pale, like a ghostly army. Then, I see them gathering strength, singing their hymns, building their temples... taking the Gospel all around the earth!

The sound of trumpets is heard

DIOCLETIAN

(With fear) Galerious approaches! Flee, Sebastian! Go into the palace! I'll help you to escape!

SEBASTIAN

If I do so, you will say: he was a coward, he didn't have the courage to stand up to his convictions. If I die, you will remember my word. Perhaps the seed will bear fruit.

DIOCLETIAN

(Pressing him) Go, I will save you!

SEBASTIAN

And who will save my brothers?

DIOCLETIAN

Only you matter, I consider you my son!

SEBASTIAN

You say "only you matter"... and you are not ashamed. To those you persecute, all the sons, matter!

Galerious enters: Sebastian hides is face.

GALERIOUS

I salute you, Diocletian. Who dares bother you at the stairwell of your palace?

DIOCLETIAN

(Hesitates) A fortuneteller, who can read the future.

GALERIOUS

And what has he predicted?

DIOCLETIAN

That my Caesar Galerious will spill the blood of my lineage.

GALERIOUS

(A silence) And which lies will he tell me? Speak!

Sebastian faces him. Galerious, surprised, stares at him.

SEBASTIAN

You will fall, victim of an illness that will make you curse life for your sufferings. Then, you will sign the peace with the Christians, and you will pray their God to stop your pains.

GALERIOUS

How dare you! Treacherous Captain, you are the one who will curse life for his sufferings! *(To Diocletian)* You ordered his death, Diocletian!

DIOCLETIAN

My archers pierced his body, but his wounds have healed!

GALERIOUS

A Christian and a sorcerer! *(Shouting)* Burn him! No! Your God could save you from the fire... You shall be mutilated, and beheaded! And, let us see if he can put

together what I have separated! Your remains will be discarded in the sewer. No one will ever find them, to pay you homage as a martyr... Arrest him, my guards! I, Galerious, condemn you to eternal oblivion!

Incidental music. They leave, as Juliana enters, carrying a banner with a painted image of Saint Sebastian.

SCENE 8

The 4 Mothers and Magdalena (as Mother 5) enter wearing black transparent veils over their faces. Juliana recites:

JULIANA Galerious takes out his sword,
 and orders: "Behead him!
 then throw his remains
 in the Roman filthy sewer!"

MOTHER 1
How strange... it happens over and over again.

MOTHER 3
Always the same!

MOTHER 4
How men can do this to other men?

MOTHER 1
Over and over...

MOTHER 2
The flesh stuck to their clothes...

MOTHER 3
Their bones tied with wire...

MOTHER 2

In an oven, deep, full of lime...

MOTHER 4

In a well...

MOTHER 5

In a clandestine land, where he, who had a name, had lost it.

MOTHER 1

Centuries back, you will find the same: men killing men, and doing away with their corpses.

CHORUS OF MOTHERS

How can it happen, over and over again?

JULIANA The order was obey,
 Sebastian was condemned.
 See how he bleeds...
 See the light on his face!
 With the sign of the cross,
 the Saint gave up life!

Incidental music

MOTHER 4

It is hard for us, mothers, to have a missing son...

MOTHER 1

Even harder it is to find him, and see how he lost his life!

MOTHER 3

Better not find him...

MOTHER 1

Nothing is better! Everything is worse: to know or not to know about your missing son, to find him dead, or to see how they killed him!

*Mother 1, who is more in evidence, bends
in her grief. The other 4, recite now in
canon:*

THE 4 MOTHERS

He had his feet, his feet, his hands, his hands, his
throat, his throat, his vital organs, his vital organs,
his throat, his feet, his hands... cut off... cut off..

MOTHER 1

Beheaded!!!

Brief musical sound to underline.

SILENCE

JULIANA And to a hidden sewer
 they carried his sacred corpse
 hoping that, Sebastian
 in oblivion would be left.

MOTHER 4

We can not forget them.

MOTHER 5

Because this crimes, with the passing of time, could
seem less horrible!

MOTHER 2

We could get use to the gesture of taking in our hands
pieces of a jaw, saying: "Yes, he was my son, he was
kind and generous..."

MOTHER 3

Or seeing a skull coming out of the earth, murmur: "my
husband never hurt anybody."

MOTHER 2

Or when we recognize in a rag, one of our husband's
woolen stockings we knitted by the fire, we'll say:
"he was gentle, he always fulfilled his duties"...

MOTHER 1

(Taking off her veil, going to front stage) My son...
with your death, I lost my life! No one should allow
these crimes to be silenced, or fall into oblivion!

JULIANA They hide the saint's remain
but their effort was vain:
the place of his secret burial
he announced to a saintly woman
CHORUS Now all the pilgrims know
where Saint Sebastian lies!

*Now the Mothers following Juliana, move round
in a circle. Mother 1 remains in place.*

MOTHERS AND JULIANA

-We do not want revenge, neither oblivion.
-Don't call them "the 19 from Yumbel",
-..."the 14 from Lonquen".
-They can't be only a number... a figure.
-Behind a figure there's no place for the man.
-...or the griefs of those who loved them.
-Call him by the name we use to greet him.
-Tell people how he looked like...
-Talk about his sorrows...
-And his hopes....

MOTHER 1

My son: since I came back to life, there is not a
single day in which I do not feel your presence or
hear your voice.

JULIANA As Sebastian predicted,
how sad were the last days
of the Emperor Diocletian.

In his old age, he would cry,
 and say, with tears in his eyes:
 "The empire has collapsed
 my glory is extinguished,
 and no one praises my name!"
 "Oh, Sebastian, he clamored,
 only you, gave me love!"

Incidental music, light on Mother 1

MOTHER 1

Son, where did they take you? Where are you? *(Pause, answers to herself:)* "Mother, it is dark here. I open my eyes and I close them, and it is dark. My hands are tied, my body is bent and I am cold." *(Pause)* Son, we shall never stop looking for you, even though they always give us the same answer: "the trial is slow, come tomorrow, we have already checked, he has not been arrested, we know nothing about him, nothing can be done!" Son, the Habeas Corpus doesn't save anyone from torture! *(Pause)* "Mother, a river never ends! Mother, you know what is worth, and you won't stop building with your hands a future, if I can leave you dignity forever!" *(Pause)* Son, they are tearing you to pieces, not granting you the right to live, neither to die! And the judges will write, calmly: "add this to the file, study it, store it away and... forget it!" Because, what's important for some, are only the fulfilled requests. Legal matters run out slowly... and life, goes out fast! *(Pause)* "Mother, I feel like dying at every moment, my victory is none other than my silence, and my fixed idea, is to tell you I have not change. Our blood is limited, our heart gets tired, and there is this lack of air, thirst and hunger. But, woman, do not let them kill your soul!" (1)

(1) Based on a poem that Jose Manuel Parada, -who was assassinated in 1985-, wrote when his step father was arrested and disappear.

The mothers and the actors, Chinchinero and Juliana move about and Mother 1 joins them, in a procession. Alejandro and Marta offer them some candles inside red paper carnations, which look like small Chinese lanterns.

MOTHER 2

Saint Sebastian, do not let us to forget those who are missing!

THE MOTHERS

Do not permit it!

MOTHER 3

Life is hard, and we are so prone to forgetfulness!

MOTHER 4

If we forget the past, we shall be condemned to live it again!

THE MOTHERS

Do not allow it, Sebastian!

MOTHER 1

Thus, when we remember them, we shall say, never again!

THE MOTHERS

Never more, never again!

Now, the procession can descend into the theater and return to stage, preceded by Juliana who carries the banner with the image of the Saint, Mothers their candles, while they name those who were found buried in Yumbel's cemetery:

ONE -Juan Acuña

CHORUS -Pray for him, Saint Sebastian.

ONE -Luis Aranedá

CHORUS -We entrust him to you!

- ONE -Manuel Becerra
 CH. -Saint Sebastian, look after him.
 ONE -Ruben Campos, Dagoberto Garfias
 CH. -Pray for their souls.
 ONE -Juan Jara, Fernando Grandon
 CH. -Take our love to them!
 ONE -Jorge Lamaña, Heraldo Muñoz, Federico Riquelme
 CH. -Sebastian, we entrust them to you.
 ONE -Oscar Sanhueza, Luis Ulloa, Raul Urrea
 CH. -Look after them.
 ONE -Juan Villarroel, Horge Zorrilla, Eduardo Gutierrez
 CH. -Saint Sebastian, take our love to them.
 ONE -Mario Jara, Alfonso Macaya, Wilson Muñoz
 CH. -Took them with you into the Holy Kingdom!

JULIANA

From your sanctuary in Yumbel, protect us, Saint Sebastian, so that we may live in a free country where justice reigns!

MOTHERS 2 and 3

Give us that hope, miraculous Saint

Te beats of a "polka" start, Chinchinero accompanies with his instruments. A street barrel-organ ca be played.

JULIANA

Today is the celebration of Sain Sebastian!

CHORUS

We congratulate the Saint!

CHINCHINERO

The pilgrims are here!

Unexpectedly, a popular performance forms in the square with the passing of a couple wearing cute masks and dancing the polka, and some steps of the popular dance, "the cueca". They cross the stage. One of the actors is handling puppets; another may enter with his cart, garnished with color paper, selling candles and sweets. The Mothers have taken off their veils and put the candles down, in the altarpiece, where they had left a small, naive statue of Sebastian, like the one in Yumbel. Everybody joins to the celebration. Some are carrying flags with the Saint Sebastian's colors, red and yellow.

CHORUS We have come to Yumbel
to celebrate you.
our beloved Sebastian,
with carnations and verses

VOICES Long live the Saint!
We pay homage to you, Sebastian!
Do no forget your faithful pilgrims!

*Chinchinero turns round in center stage,
playing drum and cymbals.
Juliana at the platform, announces:*

JULIANA

Your attention! Today, January 20th, is the feast of our patron Saint Sebastian, and the actors have just performed a play that tells of his life and martyrdom, called...

Drums and cymbals

JULIANA AND ALL

"The Altarpiece of Yumbel!"

INCIDENTAL MUSIC FOR THE FINAL SONG
(A MARCH)

*In a single file, facing the audience, all
the actors of the play, sing, hand in hand:*

CHORUS

We invoke you in Yumbel
and to your famous sanctuary,
throngs of faithful pilgrims
have come to pay you homage!
In ancient Rome, and nowadays,
the dancers and the singers
say piously and with joy:
Between heaven and earth
injustice is a plague
the only remedy is love!

They repeat, stepping back and forward:

Between heaven and earth
injustice is a plague
the medicine is LOVE!

THE END

Santiago de Chile, May 1991

ENTAL MUSIC FOR THE FINAL SONG

The image of Saint Sebastian, who was brought here, long ago, by the

Say the words of the play, sing, hand in hand:

single life, facing the audience, all

actors of the play, sing, hand in hand:

JULIANA

the most

it happens

that

God a

A Colo

when

he we

He sur

and forgot

between heaven and earth

justice is a plague

the only remedy is love!

CHINCH.

Later on,

when they

people

From Yumb

JULIANA

"We can't give

Because he

CHINCH.

Not even

could they

ACT 2

Fulfill our request, Saint Sebastian:

THE END

Yes, do it, miracle!

ORCHESTRA

Requies: he is miraculous but very cunning

requests, but if someone knows if his requests

turns his the but (Ammonia) back but his will

JULIANA

They will rehearse in the square!

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