Title: From the Revolution to the Diaspora: The Role of a Cuban Actress in the Forging of a Transnational Identity

Throughout the spring semester of 2010, I had the opportunity to familiarize myself with the Cuban Heritage Collection at the University of Miami. My research from those months covered the work of the Cuban actress, Laura Zarrabeitia, with an emphasis on her involvement in theater during the sixties. The resources at the CHC allowed me to study her life and career in theater in Cuba through primary resources including production programs, employment contracts, identification cards and even visa applications. I have gained insight into her evolution as an actress during this period of dramatic and rapid change in Cuban history. My research from that spring summarized her work in Cuba up to the point that she could no longer endure the political climate, resigned her position as an actress and subsequently left her native country.

A major focal point of my research that semester was the accumulation and addition of information into the Cuban/Latino Theater Archive (http://scholar.library.miami.edu/archivoteatral/) in order to create a more comprehensive database covering Cuban Theater. The end result of my work was a detailed page in the archive on Laura Zarrabeitia and her work in the sixties. This summer (as a Goizueta Research Fellow), my goal was to extend her page by covering her career during the seventies, eighties and nineties so that I might trace her artistic trajectory in exile.

As all should, my thesis evolved from dramatically from what I had originally set out to research. At first, I thought I could gain insight as to how Laura Zarrabeitia represented herself as Cuban actress
just from studying her past and present. After discovering a pamphlet advertising the *Ciclo Teatro Cubano*, or the “Cycle of Cuban Theater,” in Zarrabeitia’s hectic archive, I realized exactly what I wanted my research to emphasize.

*El Ciclo Teatro Cubano* was a production series of seven Cuban plays (by Cuban playwrights) performed in Caracas, Venezuela in the mid nineties. The following plays were highlighted during this tour, in which Laura Zarrabeitia either starred or directed:

- *Los Acosados* by Matías Montes Huidobro
- *La Palangana* by Raúl de Cárdenas
- *El Caso se Investiga* by Antón Arrufat
- *Mañana es una Palabra* by Lora Badías
- *Gas en los Poros* by Matías Montes Huidobro
- *Juego de Damas* by Julio Matas
- *La Soga* by Matías Montes Huidobro

The Cuban Heritage Collection at the University of Miami allowed me to find the original scripts for nearly all of the mentioned plays; a feat that should not be taken lightly. Each play gave me insight into the type of ‘transnational identity’ these Cuban actors, directors and playwrights wanted to portray publicly. If I had the opportunity to continue my research, I would dive even further into the analysis of the scripts; even into the histories of the playwrights themselves. Nonetheless, the Goizueta Fellowship gave me unprecedented access to invaluable materials, which allowed me to highlight the works of an incredible actress that otherwise, would not have been recognized. Her contributions to the formation of a ‘Cuban identity’ despite the chaos of the diaspora should not be forgotten, and I hope to see my page on her life and works made public so that others (with a passion for Cuban theater) might pick up where I left off.