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NEWSLETTER

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WEEKLY NEWSLETTER COVERING LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN ISSUES
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CITY OF GOD

A CINEMATIC SHOW OF THE ROUGH SIDE OF BRAZILIAN LIFE

Brazil's landmark film City of God (2002), directed by Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund and based on Paulo Lins' novel, remains one of the most powerful portrayals of urban violence and social inequality in Latin American cinema.

With a screenplay by Bráulio Mantovani, the film was nominated for four Academy Awards, including Best Director and Best Adapted Screenplay, marking a turning point for Brazilian storytelling on the global stage.

Set in the infamous favela of Cidade de Deus in Rio de Janeiro, the film follows the life of Buscapé, a young boy who dreams of becoming a photographer while navigating the brutal realities of gang warfare and police corruption.

Through his lens, viewers witness the rise of Zé Pequeño, a ruthless drug lord whose reign of terror transforms the community into a battlefield.

While Buscapé seeks escape through photography, others his age are pulled into cycles of crime and violence. The death of Bené, Zé Pequeño's only stabilizing influence, triggers a war between rival factions, drawing in children, teenagers, and former soldiers like Mané Galinha. The conflict escalates, leaving devastation in its wake.



In a pivotal moment, Buscapé captures an image of Zé Pequeño's gang that lands on the front page of a newspaper—an act that opens the door to a professional career but also forces him to confront the ethics of representation and survival.



The film's conclusion is as harrowing as its beginning. Zé Pequeño is ultimately killed by the very children he once recruited, and Buscapé faces a choice: expose police corruption or sell the photo of the slain drug lord. He chooses the latter, securing his future as a photographer while the cycle of violence continues.

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THE NOPAL CACTUS

MEXICO'S ICONIC SUPERFOOD, MEDICINAL MARVEL, AND ECONOMIC ENGINE

The prickly pear cactus, or nopal, is an emblematic plant native to Mexico and features alongside the eagle and serpent on the national coat of arms, evoking the founding myth of Tenochtitlan.

Belonging to the cactus family, nopal is a cornerstone of Mexico's ecological richness and cultural heritage. It produces two edible fruits—the sweet tuna and the tart xoconostle—and figures prominently in both popular culture and traditional medicine.

In Mexican cuisine, nopal paddles are prepared in myriad ways: boiled, grilled, powdered, stewed, in soups, salads, juices, and even desserts.

Prehispanic healers recognized many of nopal's skin-healing properties, using it to treat burns, contusions, and inflammatory conditions. They applied fresh pads directly to wounds, relying on the plant's natural soothing and anti-inflammatory effects.



Modern research has confirmed additional benefits, showing that nopal contains anti-cancer and anti-diabetic compounds, supports weight management, and provides a rich source of calcium.

Studies reveal that consuming blended extracts or fresh pad fragments can lower blood sugar in people with diabetes. This effect is attributed to nopal's soluble fiber, or mucilage, which slows intestinal glucose absorption and enhances cellular sensitivity to insulin—though fresh nopal should be viewed as a dietary adjunct, not a standalone cure.

Nopal paddles contain two types of beneficial fiber. Insoluble fiber remains intact, promoting digestive health by lubricating the intestinal walls. Soluble fiber swells on contact with water, helping to regulate cholesterol and blood sugar levels.

Mexico's annual nopal production exceeds 812,000 metric tons, with the state of Morelos leading the country.

Nearly 90 percent of the harvest comes from the central region, and the United States is the primary export destination.

Published by teleSUR 19 September, 2025



CHAMAMÉ

FROM THE PARANÁ RIVER TO THE WORLD, ARGENTINA'S LIVING HERITAGE

Born in Argentina's northeast, chamamé blends Guaraní rhythms, European instruments, and African influences into a living tradition that bridges borders and generations. Recognized by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage, it remains both a community ritual and a global sound.

Chamamé is more than a musical genre. Born in Argentina's northeastern province of Corrientes, it is a cultural expression that carries the memory of the Paraná River and the resilience of its people. Each year on September 19, Argentina observes National Chamamé Day, commemorating the death of Mario del Tránsito Cocomarola in 1974, the legendary composer regarded as one of the genre's founding voices.

Roots of a Mestizo Tradition

Chamamé reflects the cultural crossroads of the Litoral region. It fuses Guaraní rhythms, rural poetry, European instruments like the accordion and bandoneón, and African influences carried through the diaspora. The result is a sound at once festive and intimate, embodied in the couple's close embrace and the sharp footwork of the zapateo.

Originally a local practice in rural gatherings and family celebrations, chamamé gradually expanded beyond Corrientes to neighboring Paraguay, Brazil, and Uruguay. Today it stands as a transnational heritage, bridging communities across borders while maintaining its deep local resonance.

A Worldview in Music

Chamamé is not only performed—it is lived. Its lyrics speak of rivers, forests, the countryside, and everyday affections, while its melodies convey a sense of belonging and endurance. For many communities, dancing or listening to chamamé affirms both memory and identity in the face of cultural homogenization.

This depth explains why in 2020 UNESCO inscribed chamamé on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The recognition underscored not only the richness of its music and dance, but also the way communities continue to nurture, renew, and transmit the tradition across generations.

A Tradition in Motion

Chamamé today is both deeply traditional and strikingly contemporary. It remains at the heart of major festivals—most notably the National Chamamé Festival in Corrientes—yet it also adapts to new cultural circuits. Younger musicians blend chamamé with rock, jazz, or electronic music, while audiovisual productions and streaming platforms project it to audiences far beyond the Paraná.

Rather than diluting its essence, these reinventions highlight its vitality. Chamamé sustains its role as a community ritual in peñas and local celebrations, while also securing a place on international stages within the world music scene.

Living Memory of the South

Chamamé stands as an example of how South Global cultures preserve their heritage while engaging with the world on their own terms. In every accordion phrase and in every dance step, it carries a memory that resists erasure, reminding us that cultural heritage is not static but alive, reshaped with each performance and each generation.

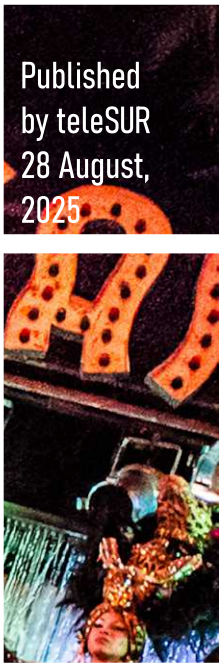
TROPICANA

CUBA'S LEGENDARY CABARET UNDER THE STARS

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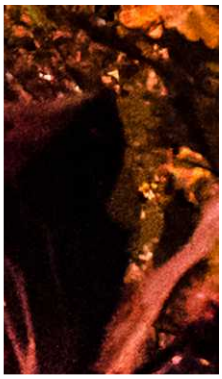












With over eight decades of dazzling performances, El Tropicana stands as Cuba's most iconic cabaret and a global symbol of tropical glamour. Known as the "Paradise Under the Stars," it was inaugurated on New Year's Eve 1939 on the lush grounds of Villa Mina in Marianao, Havana.

By 1940, it adopted the name Tropicana, inspired by a melody composed by Alfredo Brito and suggested by choreographer Sergio Orta.

What sets Tropicana apart is its open-air architecture nestled in a tropical forest, a bold departure from traditional cabaret design. Originally built for 300 guests, it now accommodates over 1,000, offering immersive shows that blend nature, music, and dance.

The cabaret's early success was driven by visionary entrepreneurs like Víctor de Correa and later Martín Fox, whose business acumen and love for the venue's vegetation helped elevate Tropicana to international fame.

The 1940s saw groundbreaking productions like Congo-Pantera, which integrated the surrounding foliage into the choreography, with dancers emerging from the trees and dramatic lighting enhancing the jungle ambiance.

Tropicana has hosted global stars such as Josephine Baker, Tongolele, Xavier Cugat, and Los Chavales de España, alongside Cuban icons like Rita Montaner, Bola de Nieve, and Alfredo Brito. It earned nicknames like "Monte Carlo of the Americas" and "the most beautiful casino in the world."



The cabaret's reputation owes much to its artistic directors. Roderico Neyra (Rodney), known as "El Mago," revolutionized Cuban cabaret with lavish productions and international collaborations. His successors—Joaquín M. Condall, Santiago Alfonso, and Tomás Morales—continued the legacy with innovations like the "total show," where performers danced among the audience, and the creation of the Tropicana Dance School.

Condall's productions toured globally, including performances at the Casino de Montecarlo and Broadway's Beacon Theatre. Alfonso's Tropicana: La gloria eres tú and Morales's Tambores en Concierto further cemented the cabaret's status as a cultural powerhouse.

Tropicana isn't just a cabaret—it's a living archive of Cuban artistry, resilience, and joy.

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WISHED FOR DEATH BUT COULD NEVER DIE



VILARIÑO'S IMMORTAL POETRY

August unfolds as a quiet homage to Idea Vilariño, whose birth in the eighth month of 1920 in Montevideo marked the beginning of one of Latin America's most dreadful voices. Emerging from the crucible of the "Generation of 45," she distilled the vast, tumultuous human condition into delicate, stark verses — poems stripped of anything superfluous, where every word carries the weight of intimacy.

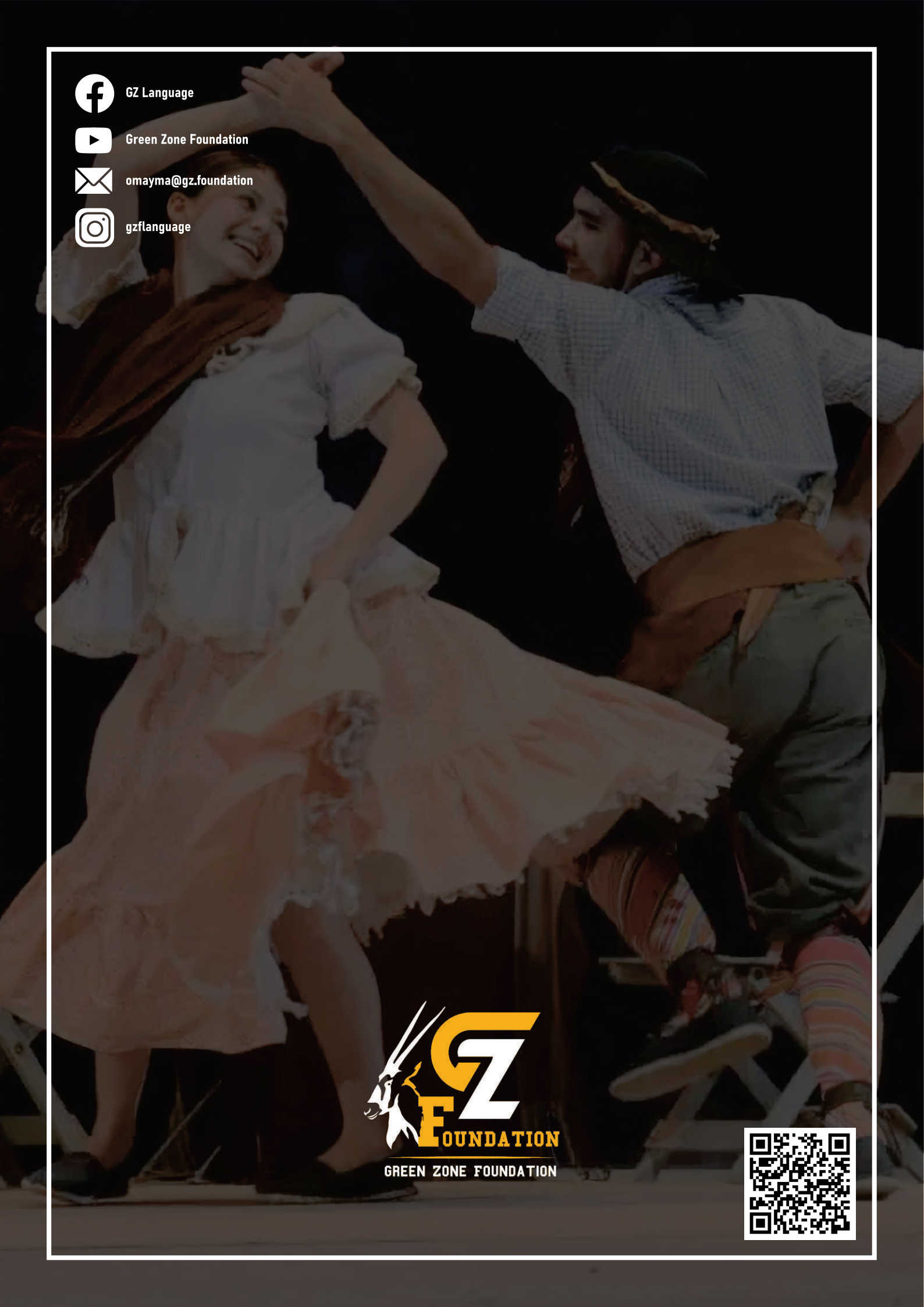
Vilariño's poetry is distinguished by its stark clarity and emotional depth. Eschewing ornate language, she crafted verses that delve into themes of love, loss, loneliness, and existential reflection with a bare and potent simplicity. Through this approach, she communicates the delicate struggles of human experience with striking intensity. Her poems, such as the acclaimed "Nocturnos" (Night Pieces) and the poignant "Ya no" (Not Anymore), reveal the fragility of relationships and the ache of unfulfilled love, using repetition and sparse language to highlight emotional truths.

Under the title "If I died tonight" she wrote: "If I died tonight / if I could die / if I died / if this fierce coitus / endless / fought over and merciless / hug with no mercy / kiss with no truce / reached its peak and loosened / if right now / if now / narrowing my eyes I died / I felt that it was over / that the struggle ceased (...)"



Pain in Idea Vilariño's poetry reveals the deep emotional struggles of grief, heartbreak, and loneliness, often drawn from her personal experiences. Death appears frequently as a desire for release from relentless suffering and as a stark reflection on life's fragility. Using simple, direct language, her poems powerfully express suffering as an essential part of human existence and the search for meaning amidst despair.

As the Latin American literary community commemorates her birth month, Idea Vilariño's enduring voice remains a testament to the power of simplicity and sincerity in capturing the complexities of the human heart.



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