



# Trumpets in the Mountains: Theater and the Politics of National Culture in Cuba

*Laurie Aleen Frederik*

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*Trumpets in the Mountains* is a compelling ethnography about Cuban culture, artistic performance, and the shift in national identity after 1990, when the loss of Soviet subsidies plunged Cuba into a severe economic crisis. The state's response involved opening the economy to foreign capital and tourism, and promoting previously deprecated cultural practices as quintessentially Cuban. Such contradictions of Cuba's revolutionary ideals elicited an official preoccupation with how twenty-first-century *cubanía*, or Cubanness, was to be understood by its citizens and creatively interpreted by its artists. The rural *campesino* was re-envisioned as a key symbol of the future; the embodiment of socialist humility, cultural pureness, and educated refinement; potentially the *Hombre Novísimo* (even newer man) to replace the *Hombre Nuevo* (new man) of Cuban communist philosophy.

*Campesinos* inhabit some of the island's most isolated areas, including the mountainous regions in central and eastern Cuba where Laurie A. Frederik conducted research among rural communities and professional theater groups. Analyzing the ongoing dialogue of cultural officials, urban and rural artists, and *campesinos*, Frederik provides an on-the-ground account of how visions of the nation are developed, manipulated, dramatized, and maintained in public consciousness. She shows that *cubanía* is defined, and redefined, in the interactive movement between intellectual, political, and everyday worlds.

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