

# *Mucho Corazon*

## **A love story**

### **Starring:**

Milades Sosa

Leon Perlee

A documentary feature by:

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LEON: The State decides for us who we should love, and who not. It's like Big Brother.

MILADES: It's as if we become something dangerous.

LEON: This is the nightmare script from George Orwell.

SOUND: Scraping of organ crank

LEON: So. The crank is on.

SOUND: Crank turns, organ bellows breathe.

LEON: As soon as you start to turn, the organ comes alive. It becomes a living thing. Even when you only hear the bellows working, you hear the wind. It already starts to live. You know that there's something going to happen.

SOUND: organ bellows breathing.

VOICE: We are one, eh? We are divided into two persons but we are one. Yeah. I love him. He is everything to me.

MUSIC: *Tulips From Amsterdam* (Dutch organ)

LEON: My name is Leon Perlee. In fact my real name is Leon Von Leiben. But since our company is named the Perlee organ company, they also call me Perlee. And in fact I'm quite proud about that fact because I try to maintain the business in the same high quality standards my grandfather used to maintain. And I only have four hands, because my brother is also working in the factory together with me. But with four hands you still have to do a lot of work. You have to save money to buy materials, everything. Well, it's not too easy but we can keep our heads above water. But we have to work hard for it.

MUSIC: *Tulips From Amsterdam* finishes.

SOUND: Street sounds of Holguin, Cuba.

MILADES: My name is Milades Sosa Aguilera. I'm 24 years old. I live here in Holguin, Cuba. I live in a big neighbourhood, but not one of the best, eh? There is not any engineers, no doctor. Most of them don't work and they just live in the street trying to sell something and to sell black market. And I like to learn. I went to university. At university I was studying to be a teacher of English.

SOUND: Music-book punching machine in the Perlee workshop.

LEON: (punching holes) Here's one forgotten...

SOUND: More punching of organ book.

LEON: An organ book is made of zig-zag folded cardboard. It has to be punched with holes in a certain pattern and this pattern is the music which the organ will play. When a hole in the book passes over one of the keys, the key will jump up in the hole, and the note in the organ which is connected with this particular key will start to sound. And then the pipes will start to speak. So when you make a new music book you have to put in your inner self, your soul, the way you think, the way you feel. And that comes out when the organ plays.

SOUND: Street sounds of Holguin, Cuba.

MILADES: I know we have problems, and we are among the worst, poorest countries of the world. But I still love Cuba, and I will defend my country. Because sometimes being poor we can be

happier than rich people. Sometimes rich people fill their souls with gold, with richness, with luxury, but they are empty. They don't have love, eh?

SOUND: Perlee organ workshop.

LEON: Every music book has a personality of its own because of the music which is on it. And most of the music which has been written deals about love. So... I think that's good.

SOUND: Music-book punching machine.

That should do it. (Sound of getting up) So now I first have to start the organ and then I can put in the music book.

SOUND: Organ feeder mechanism squeaks.

LEON: That's the melody from the film "True Love." I think it was with Dean Martin. Okay. Let's start the organ.

MUSIC: Organ cranking, music *True Love* (Dutch organ)

LEON: At the time of the foundation of the factory, the Jordaan in the city of Amsterdam was a neighbourhood of workers, artists, also poor families. People didn't have enough income to go to a theatre, or music performances. So an organ in the streets was a big party. And the same thing happened in Cuba.

(Music)

LEON: As far as I know the first organs arrived in Cuba in 1886. Those first organs came actually from Paris, provided with waltzes, polkas, marches, sometimes hymns. Of course after some time the Cubans got quite bored by European music and started to arrange their own music: boleros, rhumba, meringe, especially the *son* music.

And I always hoped once to have the opportunity to go to Cuba and to find out what was going on there. I hardly spoke to anybody about it because I wanted to keep it for myself. Ha ha. So finally in 1994 I got to Cuba.

MUSIC: *El Perico* (Cuban organ)

LEON: So I was standing at Guadalevaca beach, white sands, blue sea, blue sky, people in bathing suits, bikinis, eh? It's very nice.

And there is a big open-air tent with a small concrete stage and there is put an organ with a battery of percussionists next to it, five people playing bongo, congo, timbales, just name it. And I was so impressed by it because it just like a real orchestra which was playing. It was marvelous.

(Music finishes)

MILADES: Well. My uncle, the one who works at the organ factory, told me that there was a group from Holland who were going to be at the factory, they were interested in organs. And he was really excited about that. They were going to have a party for those persons. He invited me to go there but... He said that I could speak English. Mmmm. I was a little afraid, I didn't dare to talk to any foreigner. Then I think he said that at the factory that I could help translating. He insisted, and I didn't want to be impolite. And I went with him to the factory.

MUSIC: *Mucho Corazon* (Beni More vocal version)

I am sitting at a table with my uncle, having fun, drinking. And then all of a sudden I see that big man, white skin... Ah!... That look in his face! Like a child. And I felt my heart starts to beat faster. I am looking at him, only looking at him, wishing that he can feel my sight on his back and he will look back to me. But I am too far from him, huh? He won't see me anyway because there are many other girls prettier than me, and I'm thinking I won't win.

LEON: There came a man towards me, and he tried to start a conversation, but he found that my Spanish was just as good as his English. He asked me to wait, and he came back with a young lady with sunglasses on, and it came out that she was his niece.

MILADES: I took my glasses off. I'm looking into his eyes. Something was happening in him. It's the same that is happening inside me, I could see it in his eyes.

SOUND: Music stops, heartbeat.

LEON: From the first moment she took off her glasses, I felt like... coming home. Everything fell in its place. My soul was complete.

MILADES: It was just love at first sight.

LEON: I just knew I was in love. Ha!

(Music starts again)

MILADES: We were talking, it was so nice talking, it was like if I had known him my whole life. Ah, it was great.

LEON: I was forced to leave there because we had to be on time at the airport. So I tried to extend the time of leaving as long as possible, but they were calling me "Come on, Perlee, we have to go! The airplane is waiting and..." "Yeah, yeah, it's okay, I'm coming!" Five minutes later: "Perlee! Come on now! We have to go!"

MILADES: And he said "I like you very much" and I was... Oooh! Do you want to have my address? And he said "yes, of course."

LEON: And I gave her some postcards, so she had my address.

MILADES: Ah. He didn't want to leave. and I didn't want him to leave.

LEON: It was hard to say goodbye, but...

MILADES: I saw the car leaving, and he was looking back and saying goodbye.

MUSIC: *Mucho Corazon* finishes.

SOUND: Music-book punching machine in Perlee workshop

LEON: I hoped she would write me but it was still unexpected. I was happy about it. Because I hoped it was not just something which lasted one day. At least not for my feelings. I was sure about my case, but of course you can never look into the soul of another person.

SOUND: Letter rustling

LEON: (reading letter) Cuba. August 31st, 1995. Dear Perlee, first of all my most sincere greetings to you and my wishes of prosperity. For beginning this letter I will tell you that I have missed you as if I had met you since my childhood. Referring to me, I am 21 years old, I

study at the teacher's training college so I will be a teacher soon. I enjoy dancing, reading, having new friends, traveling here in Cuba.

SOUND: Westerkerk clock tower in background

It will be very nice to hear about you and your country. I know that in spite of being a small country, it's nice. Besides that, there is produced a delicious butter. My friend, you are not going to believe that I keep the postcard you gave me in a place where I can take a glance at it every time. It really brings good memories. Take care of yourself, and write soon. Kisses, sincerely, Milades.

So, ha. I hoped for it and, well... It's something which you can touch, you can read it again and... It was one of the best moments in my life.

SOUND: Rooster crowing, voices, Holguin neighbourhood.

MILADES: Dear Milades, thanks for the nice letter. I received your letter the 10th of October. There is something on its way for you. Hope you like it. love and kisses, Leon. And when he said there is something on its way for you, he meant *Mucho Corazon*. This is the music book he arranged with love for me, and the first page you can see how he dedicated it "For Milades from Leon with love." It was in September '95 in Amsterdam. The rest is just a piece of cardboard full of holes. He can read it, I can't. And I didn't know what to do with it, ha ha. I don't have an organ. I have to go to the factory. This is the tune, uh huh.

MUSIC: Leon's arrangement of *Mucho Corazon* (Cuban organ)

LEON: I arranged it especially for Milades, just out of love, and I liked the music. I didn't understand the words exactly because at that time my Spanish was just as good as my Chinese, so... you can imagine. But only the title was enough for me and that's what I just felt. *Mucho Corazon*, "with a lot of hearty."

MILADES: I heard it. I liked it. I could recognise the tune. Beni More used to sing that song, and Beni More is a Cuban musician, one of the best.

These are the words to *Mucho Corazon*:

Di si encontraste en tu pasado,  
Una razon para querer me o para olvidarme.

Say if you found in your past  
A reason to love me or to forget me.  
I don't need a reason to love you,  
Because my heart is so big.

Yo para querer no necesito una razon,  
Me sobra mucho, pero mucho corazon.

LEON: Holguin, September 23rd, 1995. Dear Leon, I have missed you a lot. It was so nice to learn that you have not forgotten me. In fact I was afraid about it...

MILADES: Amsterdam, 20th of September 1995. Dear Milades, before opening your letter I had to calm down myself because my heart was beating like crazy. And as I read it it gave me a very warm and good feeling inside.

(letter rustling)

LEON: To be sincere, I have read it more than six times today. And now I decided to write back to you. Believing that you think of me too was one of the best things that could have happened to me.

MILADES: Dear, dear Milades. Would you believe me if I told you that every night before I go to sleep, and in the mornings when I arise, I kiss your name on the letter? So you have to write back very soon because it's wearing off very rapidly.

LEON: And my mother is willing to meet the man who has excited me so much. She is sure he has to be a special one, and she is not mistaken. Ha!

MILADES: Since I got back to Amsterdam not one day has passed by without think of you, and how it would be if I could show you my country instead of writing about it. Who knows what the future might bring.

LEON: Can you imagine how I would feel if you were to come here again? Please if possible do it as soon as you can. It'll be great. Kisses, Milades.

MILADES: A thousand kisses.

MUSIC: *Mucho Corazon* finishes.

LEON: The second time I went to Holguin was December 1995.

MILADES: Ah! I was scared. Because I didn't know what to expect from a man who lives in a developed country. I didn't know what he could expect from a girl from a small city in a poor country. Hmm?

LEON: I was really nervous.

MILADES: We didn't know anything about each other. it was just some letters...

LEON: Sound stupid perhaps, but I was really nervous to meet her again.

MUSIC: Percussion intro

MILADES: I went to the airport. I saw him.

LEON: I walked towards them. And Milades, she laid her hand on the window, and I put my hand also against the window, and they were laughing because I have quite big hands and her hands are rather small. It looked as if there was a baby hand laying in my hand.

MUSIC: *Tulips from Amsterdam* (Cuban version)

MILADES: He was shaking. All his body was shaking, I could feel it when he took me in his arms.

LEON: Well, I tried to give her a kiss in the taxi, but even that didn't work. She was just like a shy bird. (laughs)

MILADES: (laughs) I was voiceless, eh? I couldn't say a word. He tried, but he was also nervous.

They took me to my house, and I told my mother "Oh mama, I'm dying. I don't know what's happening." It was something completely new, eh? What I was feeling since I met him. I couldn't explain it. I couldn't sleep that night.

And I was afraid also because many girls were going out with foreigners for money. That was not my case, but I was afraid he and the rest of the people could think that.

SOUND: Holguin street sounds, whistling, calling.

LEON: At one particular night we went out together, having some drinks at some bars.

MILADES: We were going hand by hand, talking. We had had a nice night. There was a couple behind us. It was a young man with a girl. He said "Tu fucky-fucky conmigo y yo compro." It's have sex with him and he will buy.

LEON: I got quite angry about it and I wanted to go after them but Milades was keeping me from doing that. She felt proud that I wanted to defend her, but....

MILADES: It's a problem of politics in the country, eh? Every person thinks when they see a girl with a foreigner, she is a prostitute. It's because many persons have lost their values, many Cubans. And they go after foreigners asking for money. I understand why they do it. People get desperate.

LEON: The effect of the United States embargo in Cuba on people's daily life, it's hard at the moment, it's very hard. Of course income is very low, and sometimes people don't have to eat for one or more days.

MILADES: Girls, young girls, there are many who already have kids and they don't have anything to give them for dinner, they use their body to earn money.

LEON: I don't know about this embargo, because I can't imagine what kind of danger Cuba could be to the world. It's just a small country. I don't think they are out to conquer the world.

MILADES: At the university, when I started my relation with Leon, everybody knew about it. My classmates were saying that I shouldn't keep that relationship because people were saying that I was a prostitute. Just because I had a relationship with a foreigner. And then they changed towards me. It was like if I became someone else. Hm? It was like if I was betraying my country.

LEON: I stayed there 'til the 29th of December. I was there two weeks. I still have the flight ticket.

MUSIC: *No Me Dejas Solo Otra Vez* (Cuban organ)

And as the plane left, I had problems to keep my eyes dry, so...

MILADES: These are the words to the song *Don't Leave Me Alone Again*:  
If you knew how I suffer when you go away from me,  
If you knew how I only live thinking of you,  
You'd come back to me, my dear one.

Mi amor querido. Velve pronto.  
Vuelve pronto, que necesito tenerte junto a mi.

Don't leave me alone again.  
Look how I'm dying for you.

LEON: At that time there was no light, it was very... It was a very dark period of my life, and I could not stand to my promises that I would be there in February. Then I extended the promise to, I think, May. And every time "yeah, I will be there" but every time I had the excuse again because income was not that way that I could leave just like that. Most tourists who go to Cuba are quite well-to-do, or have steady jobs with a steady income. And it's hard to explain that you can have many troubles, that you have to take care about your company to save it from going under. Incomes were quite low but I didn't know how to explain that to her, and I felt actually ashamed about it.

MILADES: I thought many things, I thought maybe he was just a tourist who came here to have fun. Huh? I regret what I thought, but I thought that. I didn't have any idea about his life or anything. What I had in mind was a European saying that he couldn't come.. for me, eh? They didn't have that kind of problem. For me it was like another world, eh? And I thought, perhaps I'm not what he needs.

LEON: And at a certain moment I felt so miserable and I didn't know what to find... uh... what to write down anymore in my letters, uh... excusing myself about not being able to come over to Cuba and to be with her. Uh... I was so depressed and so... ah! I don't know if it's self-pitying or whatever but I wasn't able to cope completely with the situation and I didn't want to tell her about that because I didn't want to make a bad impression. And I felt so miserable that stupidly enough I didn't write for about three months.

SOUND: Music finishes, organ bellows continue breathing.

MILADES: I said, in my house I don't want to listen to his name again.  
I don't want anything that has to do with him.  
I'm too young to suffer this way.  
I want to forget him.

SOUND: Organ bellows stop.

SOUND: paper rustles

LEON: (reading letter) December 19th, 1996. Dear Leon. Hearing from you was a big surprise for me. To tell you the truth I thought you'd never write again. Indeed there has been no change in my feelings, although I had decided not to write to you again and to forget about our relationship because I have already cried too much because you do not write.

MILADES: I too have tried not to think too much of you, but I failed because my heart was stronger, and walked right over my soul.

LEON: Do you think you are the only one who has problems? No, you are right, I have lots of problems and I have to keep on. I have people saying whatever they want about me, asking very personal questions. I have even to stand them saying that I am a stupid bitch because I still think of you.

MILADES: I have not been able to sleep because of a painful guilty conscience. What a terrible time you have had because of me.

LEON: Remember that love is like a plant that needs to be watered every day. Lots of luck and happiness and happiness and I suggest you to cheer up. This is not the end of life. Milades.

(sound of turning page over)

If you think of coming before April, let me know it beforehand.

MUSIC: *T.C. Boogie* (Dutch organ)

MILADES: (opening letter) My dearest, dearest piece of gold. He's so sweet. (giggles)

LEON: I miss so much your mouth, your words, your kisses...

MILADES: (giggles)

LEON: ...your big hands, and in fact I miss you all.

MILADES: He's crazy!



LEON: (laughs)

MILADES: He even wrote from the plane.

LEON: Honey, you can tell to your mother that I'm loving you more than before.

MILADES: I'll kiss you in exactly three hours. I love you forever.

(Music comes up a moment)

LEON: I already decided to ask Milades to become my wife the first time I saw her, but I didn't do so until I thought the time was ripe for it.

MILADES: We were walking around the city. It was afternoon. We decided to sit down in the Parque San Jose. We were drinking Bavaria, a Dutch beer.

LEON: And we were just talking, and at a certain moment I said to her "What would you think about the idea to become my wife?" And she said...

MILADES: Of course! I want to marry you! And I asked him "Can you say it again? Can you ask again?"

LEON: And so I repeated my question. I said "Do you want to become my wife and live with me?" After she got back her breath, she said "yes" and started crying. So I had to wait again for the rest of the afternoon, but I can tell that it was very encouraging, what happened.

MILADES: I gave him my hand. It was so slowly, so calm. He took the ring. He put the ring on my finger.

LEON: I went to a very big gold shop. Of course it was a problem because I didn't have any measure for her, but I closed my eyes while standing in the shop. I told the lady "please wait a minute, I think I can find out." I closed my eyes and I closed my fingers in my hand. I was going back in my mind to her, and I felt the size of her hand and the size of her fingers. I just imagined her hand. I knew exactly that the ring would fit.

MILADES: I was so emotional, I started to cry. I was laughing and crying at the same time. I was happy, really really happy, and he was happy also. Then we started to talk about the future. We started to make plans, to talk about kids.

LEON: Well, we will try to do our best to bring up the best in our children, and... I'm already talking as if they are there! But I feel it that way.

MILADES: I... I felt that I had found my other half, eh? I had found what I really need. and the same happened to him, the same.

We kissed. I was living in a cloud, eh?

MUSIC: *T.C. Boogie finishes*

We were both, together, living in a cloud.

VOICES: That is impossible. Because our country is rather full. ...Holland is not an immigration country...

LEON: I invited her to come here in March last year.

VOICES: ...that is impossible... if they don't have enough income...

SOUND: Music-book punching machine, Perlee workshop.  
MUSIC: *The Pearl Fishers* (Dutch organ)

LEON: The request was denied by the authorities. It took them about two or three months to come out with the answer. It had to do with a stupid mistake which I made myself. Because I wrote in the visa request that I wanted to invite my girlfriend to visit me at my house and that she could stay longer with me here.

I never should have done that. That's why the request was denied.

SOUND: Music-book punching machine.

LEON: With the Cuban government there is no problem. She has permission, the permissions which she needs to leave the country. But here in Holland, in fact in Europe, its getting harder and harder every day for strangers who want to come in to the "fortress of Europe."

SOUND: Music punching machine

LEON: When you are in love you don't think about politics. You think just like humans, without any borders, without authorities. Because actually every political system means a prison for people.

SOUND: Cuban train horn

LEON: I took Milades to Havana, to the Dutch embassy, trying to get things going one way or the other.

MILADES: We went to Havana by train. The trip was terrible, because the train took 22 hours to get from here to Havana.

SOUND: Train

MILADES: We expected the trip would be shorter. Everything was just the other way around.

LEON: It feels very frustrating because she is not just a peasant which comes from a country knowing nothing, and coming in to Holland without papers, and asking for asylum.

MILADES: When I was younger I used to say I will never leave my country. Eh? And now I want to live there because I want to live with him. Because he is important for me. I need him.

LEON: Okay, she comes from a poor country, but that doesn't mean we want to go around the laws. Laws are for everybody.

MILADES: I won't forget my country. I'm not betraying my country. It's love. It happened. I can't help it.

SOUND: Havana street

LEON: So we went there, and we went to the embassy.

MILADES: I told the woman that he had invited me more than six months ago and that my visa had been denied. And that we were there to see if there was anything else we could do because he wanted to take me to Holland. I told her that we were engaged but I think it means nothing to them, eh?

SOUND: Office door closing.

WOMAN: My name is Joke Zuidwijk, I am second secretary in the Netherlands embassy here in Havana, Cuba.

MAN: I am Nana Haspuls, and I'm working at the Dutch immigration board. Yeah well, in The Netherlands we have a restrictive admittance policy, because we are just a small country and we don't have a lot of space, and not enough jobs, and that means there are strict, very strict rules for application.

WOMAN: You can invite a Cuban person to The Netherlands if you comply with the requirements of the Dutch authorities. It only costs you a lot of money. The person who is inviting, in this case the Dutch husband, has to prove enough income to maintain the Cuban partner in The Netherlands.

MAN: We are a very cold and legal office, and we do that because we want to be the same to every person. So we just look at the rules, and whether they are in love is not really a criterion.

WOMAN: With Cubans we might suppose there are a lot of women, particularly, that try to catch a Dutchman, you know, to get away from the country. You know, they get married and as soon as they arrive in the European Union, the women, they disappear into illegality or into prostitution for that matter.

LEON: Well I really felt ashamed. And of course Milades started crying, and she was desperate. And so was I.

MILADES: Then she said that maybe my visa was denied forever. It was terrible to hear that, but I think it was just something she said to finish our conversation because I don't think it's possible to deny a visa forever.

SOUND: Music-punching machine

MUSIC: *The Pearl Fishers*

LEON: The problem which I have towards the authorities is that I can't show them on paper that I have a basic income. I can't show that on paper yet.

It's almost impossible for an organ man to make a realistic income. That's actually the main problem in this moment.

SOUND: Hammering in workshop.

LEON: At the time that I met her, Milades was studying at the university to become a teacher. But since the time she left school she has had a lot of problems, because she couldn't get any job and, well, she has been feeling quite miserable.

SOUND: Hammering

MILADES: I'm not an example to follow in school. Teachers have to be an example. And if I'm the teacher and I have relation with a foreigner, the students will learn from me. So I'm not an example to follow. I cannot be in a classroom teaching.

I'm not a stupid girl from the street. I have studied a lot. And now I feel that my knowledge is just... I'm losing. Because I'm not using anything, I'm not thinking.

Here there are rules. To work in certain places, you cannot have any kind of relation with foreigners. Of course they don't say it. But if they find out that you have a relation with a foreigner, you'd better quit. You cannot be there. It's as if we become something dangerous.

MUSIC: *The Pearl Fishers* ends.

SOUND: Westerkerk clock tower tolls.

LEON: Well, I have a double bed, and I'm sleeping on my side of the bed. And her side of the bed, I keep it fresh for her. Sometimes when I wake up I look at my side and then I realise that she isn't there, that I'm here in Amsterdam and she's far away from me, far away in Cuba. But, mmmm.....

SOUND: Page rustling

Evenkijke. I'm saying this always, evenkijke. It means "let's have a look." She was always teasing me with this. At a certain moment she started saying "Evenkijke". In real Jordaan dialect. Okay, here we go.

(reads) My dear Leon, how are you? I hope everything is okay. Leon I am missing you very much. I had never thought I could miss someone this way. Sometimes I feel like running and going to the place where you are but it's impossible. I can only cry, look at the pictures, read your letters, or think that maybe at that same time you are thinking about me. It comforts me. Every night when I go to bed I close my eyes very tight to feel your presence, your skin, your warmth. Imagining that you are here next to me, wanting to hold you in my arms and remembering all the happy moments we had together. I'm so happy I met you that afternoon at the factory. Since that day I have thought about you every day. I love you a lot. (sobs)

SOUND: Holguin neighbourhood.

MILADES: This was a present from him. He brought it in December when he came. Its a music box in the shape of an organ. A nice present, I keep it with love. And the tune it plays is "Tulips from Amsterdam."

SOUND: Winding up music box. It plays *Tulips from Amsterdam*.

I love him. He is everything to me. and I know he loves me, eh? I miss him a lot. Every day, every minute, every second. (cries) I'm sorry.

I will be patient now. We will wait. And we will be together. I hope it's soon.

SOUND: Music box tune runs down and stops.