Balance and ambition

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newwave@tulane.edu

By her own definition, Olga Merediz, a 1978 graduate of Newcomb College at Tulane University, is the consummate New Yorker. “[New York] is a place for ambition,” she says. “It&#39#39;s just a very busy town.” Merediz, a Tony-nominated actress-singer-writer, has three movies coming out this year including *The Place Beyond the Pines,* starring Oscar-nominated Bradley Cooper, Ryan Gosling and Eva Mendez, which opens March 29 in limited release.



Tulane alumna Olga Merediz takes the stage. She has made a name for herself on Broadway and in films, acting with the likes of Bradley Cooper, Ryan Gosling and Eva Mendez. (Photo from Olga Merediz)

Voice-overs are her “bread and butter,” she says. Among many jobs, she is co-writing a sitcom. But right now, “I need to concentrate on [my] writing ? to do my own thing rather than everyone else's passion project.”

Her own “passion project” is a deeply personal theater piece. “My mother and her sisters were singers,” she says. “I'm writing about how they influenced me in New York and about part of my family being communists and part being successful capitalists and how that influenced me as a performer.”

Merediz was born in Cuba and escaped with her parents to Miami by way of Jamaica when she was 5 years old. The family later moved to Puerto Rico, where she grew up.

This isn't the first time Merediz's heritage has played a role in her career. To play her part in *In the Heights*, the Broadway show for which she scored the Tony nod, Merediz drew on memories of her mother and grandmother.

The experience was powerful, she says. “It would bring up so many memories and feelings. I would be out there singing a song, and it would touch something. Feelings would flood me.”

But heartfelt experience isn't the simple key to success, she says. Success also is about control. “You have to create a balance. You can't cry. You want to let them [the audience] cry, and you have to sustain that.”

Catherine Freshley received a bachelor of arts in economics and English from Tulane in May 2009.