Opening the Windows to a Writer's Soul

Meet Tannia Ortiz: A music lover and writer, Tannia Ortiz, was born in Guayama, Puerto Rico. She currently lives in Germany with her husband and two sons. Tannia is the author of the books "The Windows To My Soul, My Walk With Jesus" and "El Espejo de mi Alma." Please visit Tannia online at: http://timewithtannia.tripod.com

BLH: How old were you when you started writing and what event inspired you to start writing?

TO: I would like to think that I was born writing and singing but the truth is it took a few years for me to start writing. I wrote my first poem, *El árbol*(*The Tree*), in elementary school. It was a homework assignment for my Spanish class. I still have a copy of that poem. As I grew older, I started to write verses for my friends Valentine's cards at school. By the time I graduated from high school, I had several school notebooks full of my verses, poems, short stories, and songs.

Although today I am a docile person, during my younger years I was a very stubborn and rebellious teenager. Writing became my best and only venue to keep my sanity while dealing with all those growing pains and character formation issues all adolescents go through.

Writing, song writing, singing, and playing my guitar are still my best therapy!

The roots of my song writing are genetics and poetry evolution. Genetics -- because my grandfather, Antonio Lopés Rodríguez, was a successful composer and trumpet player in Puerto Rico. So, it is proper to say that I was born with this talent. Poetry evolution, because one day, while reading my poems, I noticed that some of them had rhythm and the rest is history.

Most of what I wrote during my adolescent years were "youth words of wisdom" evolving around themes like love, friendship, and rebellion!

BLH: Tell us about "The Window To My Soul, My Walk With Jesus."

TO: Let me share with *Book Lover's Haven* readers a revised version of the book summary:

"*The book is the author's profession of her love for Jesus and of thanks to God for the many gifts and talents that He has given her. It also expresses her deep gratitude for God sending His only begotten Son to die for her sins and allowing her and many more to find peace in Christ and an open door back to heaven. It is a total surrender to the teachings and guidance of the Holy Spirit during the study of the Scriptures. These poems and reflections are the author's way of pouring out her heart and soul while meditating on God's Word and the marvelous daily miracles in her life."*

BLH: What inspired you to write "The Window To My Soul, My Walk With Jesus?"

TO: In May 2003, as I was about to turn 40, I had an identity crisis. I attended a silent retreat, and there the Lord revealed to me His plans for my life. This retreat being silent, it was extremely difficult for a natural born talker like myself! However, during meal times we were allowed to speak for one hour. One evening after dinner, I shared one of my meditations with another woman at the retreat house. She said, "You should publish it." The next day I mentioned it to my retreat spiritual director and she agreed. After the retreat I met with Fr. Bill, my church spiritual director, and he thought it was a wonderful idea. I understood the Lord used these three servants to offer me a glimpse of His plans for me and I listened!

BLH: Congratulations on having "The Window To My Soul, My Walk With Jesus" translated into Spanish. What was the process of having your book translated into another language like?

TO: It was an incredible experience. I translated it myself to prevent something getting lost in the translation. The most difficult part of the translation was to find the proper words to capture the original message. I wanted to be sure, that all the emotions I felt when I wrote the original meditations would be preserved and not distorted. All the meditations and letters to Jesus included in the book were inspired by a mix of emotions, and not all of them were happy ones. Having thus to relive my past was an emotionally, exhausting experience. As a result of my scrutiny, some poems became longer and others shorter. I wanted the Spanish book to be even stronger than the English one. I also wanted to avoid the mistakes I made in the original publication. For the Spanish book, *El Espejo de mi Alma*, I had total control over the content, as well as the four drawings and the book

cover.

BLH: John Howard Reid had this to say about the book, "A remarkable and unique book,Tannia Ortiz-Lopés has created a spiritual legacy that will live in the hearts of all Christians until the end of time. Taking the Old Testament book of Job as her jumping-off point, Señora Ortiz-Lopés has responded to the philosophical queries raised, verse by verse, with her own prayers and aspirations." What are some of the other comments you're receiving regarding your book?

TO: *El Espejo de mi Alma*, has not yet been officially reviewed. I am still looking for reviewers for the book. However, friends who have read the book have commented to me privately about how much they enjoyed its simplicity and profound message.

If there are book reviewers among your readers, I would like to hear from them for a potential review of my book. Both books are available as paperback and e-book. Readers can contact me at my site Time with Tannia (http://timewithtannia.tripod.com/index.html)

BLH: You've also been published in periodicals like *Story Time Tapestry* and *Wt In Spirit*. How have you gone about getting your poems published in these and other periodicals?

TO: I gained the opportunity to publish in these two Canadians periodicals by word of mouth. A friend of mine was a member of the Story Time Tapestry, and she invited me to join the group. I joined and published with them several times but then left the group in order to concentrate on other projects. *Wt in Spirit* was a high quality Christian magazine which went out of print due to having an insufficient number of subscribers. It was sad to see it go out of business because it offered a great mix of topics.

Apart from the periodicals mentioned above, I have published in local newspapers in Puerto Rico and in the USA. Living in Germany, I am currently improving my German language skills with the goal of publishing some of my writings here in Germany, as well. I need to start building my platform for the future publication of my interview book with German life stories and eyewitness accounts about the National Socialistic (NSPD) Regime and the devastation of World War II in German.

BLH: When did your website, Time With Tannia, re-launch and what can visitors expect to see when they visit the site?

TO: By the time you contacted me for an interview, the re-launch of Time with Tannia, was in preparation. However, because of some more pressing deadlines, I had to postpone the re-launch.

Nevertheless, I will give your readers a website teaser.The new site has been professionally developed with the help of my web designer brother, Cesar Ortiz. The site has a different look and is more user friendly. I am very proud of two new features, the *Gift Store* and the improved *Book Store*.

In the *Gift Store,* visitors will find information and links to a variety of websites with great gift ideas for all occasions. The store is divided into categories: art, antique items, graphics, illustrations, knitting patterns, music, and scented burners. The linked sites open up in a new tab, keeping open Time with Tannia and making it easy to return!

The*Book Store,* powered by Amazon.com, includes links to various books, including books I've reviewed. *Tannia's Corner* is now trilingual! This section is divided into three languages: English, German (Deutsch), and Spanish (Español). In each one of them, you will find my biography, press releases related to my published books, samples of my writings, and newspaper articles written in the respective languages. I am hopeful to re-launch the website before Christmas 2012!

BLH: When did you start doing blog tours and what do blog tours consist of?

TO: Blog tours are an affordable way to market your book and reach a wider audience. However, tours must be well organized! Book tours are affordable because they are free, but they are very time consuming. You need to find the bloggers willing to host you, but, properly done, they are a great marketing tool!

I started doing blog tours after I joined several writers groups and got more serious about marketing my books. Marketing books is a never ending learning process. My friends, Karina Fabian and Jo Linsdell, are the queens of blog tours! I have learned a lot from them.

BLH: Why did you decide to promote other authors, in addition to promoting your own works?

TO: Let us say, "I am a Curious George." One day I woke up to the reality that my publisher was not doing enough for me and the marketing of my book. My first publisher was located in the USA and I was living in Germany with an ocean and a huge language barrier between us.

As I started writing book reviews, I got curious about the authors and their motivations to write their books. So I decided to launch Time with Tannia to provide Christian authors a place to showcase their work and for my readers to get to know the authors. I did it for about four years but stopped due to lack of time. However, I have not discarded the possibility of starting it again in the future. Apart from that, when I was getting my feet wet in the world of writing, there were other authors willing to help me and I felt this was my best way to thank them by giving back to others what I had received.

BLH: What have you learned about yourself since you started creating stories?

TO: Hum . . .this is a very interesting question. I hope you have plenty of space for the answer! I have learned that writing is more than a career; it is way of life. I have learned about words' power to build and to destruct, regardless of whether words are sung, spoken, or written.

I have learned to be kind to newly published authors when writing my book reviews, as my word could crush someone else's dream of becoming a bestselling writer. I almost did this once and it taught me a valuable lesson about kindness and assertive criticism. This, however, doesn't mean that I will lie about my dislike of a book. I will simply write a neutral review and the word "recommended" will not be part of the review. In addition, I have learned to never be afraid to admit I made a mistake and to ask for help from those who are more seasoned than I am as I continue growing as an author and as a person.

Furthermore, I have learned that writing children's stories is extremely difficult but also a wonderful process to allow my creativity to free its wildest ideas and push me to go far beyond my limits without losing my sanity. And, I have learned that if I was more disciplined I could become the author the Lord knows I am.

BLH: Tell us about three to four key actions you take to effectively market your books online and offline?

TO: When writing book reviews for different publishers, I include a short biography with my book titles at the end of the reviews. When publishing reviews at online sites, whenever allowed, I always write: "Reviewed by the author of...." I participate in blog tours as a host and as a guest. I also moderate chat at on online conferences. Then, there are the interviews. I do all sort of interviews, online and life radio shows, TV, and/or written interviews like this one.

BLH: Who are some of your favorite writers and what is it about their work you appreciate most?

TO: Since I review mostly Catholic fiction, I have grown fond of authors like William Biersach (Fr. Baptist mystery series), Regina Doman (Fairy tales novels), and Gerard Webster (Mystery). Non-Catholic action thriller authors I like are CJ West (Randy Black action series), Gregg Hurwitz, and Jo Nesbo, just to mention a few. What I like most about the Catholic authors is their ability to create unforgettable stories with a powerful message. I like the other writers' ability to write an outstanding action thriller, using eloquent vocabulary that's easy for non-native English speakers to understand. I also like unexpected twists and turns that lead to a surprising end.

BLH: If you weren't a writer, what do you think you'd be doing right now?

TO: I could see myself as an opera singer. I grew up listening to Maria Callas and she is still my inspiration to improve my singing. Alternatively, I might be a missionary, working in an orphanage somewhere far away. When I was in high school, I considered Jobs Corps (http://www.jobcorps.gov/home.aspx) but never fully researched the opportunities it offered. That's one of my biggest regrets. At the same time, God has a purpose for me, and little by little, He continues to show me the right path to walk.

BLH: Are you working on new material? If so, what are you working on and when can we expect to see it on the market?

TO: Currently, I'm working on two totally different projects. Recently, I hired a professional children's story editor to help me shape up a dusty manuscript! My biggest and most ambitious project is the research for my German WWII interview book, which I already mentioned and on which I have been working for the past four years. I hope to have the manuscript ready for publication in about three years. At this time, I am doing some follow-up interviews. After that, I'll have to visit some archives to keep gathering information and to verify the stories. It is a fascinating project, but it is emotionally draining too. This is why I use my children's story to ease my mind.

BLH: What last words of encouragement or advice would you like to leave with our Book Lovers Haven subscribers?

TO: Never give up; no matter how hard the road ahead of you might seem. Always remember, if God leads you to it, He will guide you through it!