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THE MAYOR OF ZALAMEA

(The Best Garrotting Ever Done)

by
CALDERÓN

Adapted
by
ADRIAN MITCHELL



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(THE MAYOR OF ZALAMEA)

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INTRODUCTION

Calderón de la Barca

or How I learned to stop worrying and love the Spanish Golden Age.

This introduction is not for scholars. They know far more about Calderón than I do. It is for those people who find themselves intimidated by the strangeness of Spain, even contemporary Spain, let alone the 17th Century Spain.

I felt that same nervousness only a few years ago. When I first read about the plays of the Spanish Golden Age—from around 1500 to 1681, the period in which Calderón, Lope de Vega, Cervantes, Tirso de Molina and Rojas Zorilla flourished—I was dumbfounded by the system of values, especially the “Honour” system which seemed to dominate the drama. It was only when I began to read the plays thoroughly that I discovered that you have to know very little about such matters to understand many of the greatest plays. Honour is such a strange word in England these days. Good name and reputation are still far easier to handle.

But when you read or act or watch *The Mayor of Zalamea* you need to know about human beings, not about social codes. Of course, the more you know about the social background the more you’ll understand and enjoy. But most of us live in a world which doesn’t allow time for historical research in between work or looking for work and going to the theatre. *The Mayor of Zalamea* was the first Spanish play I attempted, using a literal translation by Gwenda Pandolfi, sticking very closely to the text, using a kind of syllabic verse. This was commissioned by the National Theatre. When I read the play for the second time I knew that given a half-decent production, it must be popular. Michael Bogdanov’s production was spare and strong and had at its centre a perfor-

mance of pure gold by Michael Bryant. The production proved that there is no difficulty for an English audience with at least one of the Golden Age plays. It started at the Cottesloe and transferred to the Olivier because more seats were needed.

After its success the National suggested another Calderón, *Life's a Dream*. But just as I was completing my version it was discovered that the Royal Shakespeare Company was about to stage a version of the same play by John Barton. I rang John, whom I didn't know at the time, to confirm that this was true, since the National had decided to scrap its plans. He is the most generous of bears and said something like: "Come on over and I'll show you mine and you show me yours." We both liked each other's versions. He'd solved problems I had been stumped by. I'd laid down some mean verse. John suggested mixing the versions together and that's what we did. He kept a kind of record of whose line was whose and it worked out about forty-six per cent John, forty-six percent Adrian and eight per cent lines which were a mixture of the two. His production was highly acclaimed both in Stratford and London and once again the availability of Spanish drama to an English audience was proved.

The Great Theatre of the World was commissioned by the Mediaeval Players. The metaphor of the play, in which God is a theatre director and the World is his stage manager appealed to me strongly. So did the humour and the pathos and the poetic wonder of the play—it is a Christian play but a pretty undogmatic one, naturally, since Calderón could take it for granted that he had a Christian audience.

The theatre is a real world. This has advantages and disadvantages. One given factor for this production was that the Players have developed many circus skills like juggling and stilt-walking. We used this by giving the play an interlude

half way through in which, since the play is much possessed by death, skeletons danced and played, giant skeletons walked on bone-like stilts and juggler skeletons demonstrated their art with skulls and bones. Disadvantages—the Players' grant couldn't stretch to a complete cast. One character, I was told, had to be left out. I chose the one which I felt was least relevant to a modern audience, the character Discretion, who chooses a contemplative life. Don't blame me, blame Mrs. Thatcher. I suppose I could have written back Discretion into the play for this published edition. I decided not to. This is a version for Philistine Britain where even a very funny and affecting play about eternal truths has to lose, if not a limb, then a few fingers in the cause of cost-effectiveness.

Calderón lived from 1600 to 1681. To find out about his life and work, read his entry in the "Oxford Companion to Spanish Literature" and Gerald Brenan's wonderful "The Literature of the Spanish People."

His work is sometimes characterised as formal, intellectual, spiritual, maybe somewhat cold. All these things are true, but there is far more to his plays. They're certainly not cold, they simply seem comparatively cool when you place them beside the red-hot passion of Lope de Vega. But there is a slow-burning passion in Calderón and also a lovely humour which is often forgotten. Lope de Vega (1562-1635) was surely a mixture of earth and fire. Calderón is air and water, a most beautiful fountain. And often, a fiery fountain.

ADRIAN MITCHELL

This collection is dedicated to all the theatre people involved in the first productions of these versions, with many thanks and much admiration.

THE MAYOR OF ZALAMEA

**A Play in Three Acts
For Ten Men and Three Women, Extras**

CHARACTERS

REBOLLEDO a soldier
LA CHISPA his mistress
SERGEANT a veteran
CAPTAIN DON ALVARO DE ATAIDE
DON MENDO an impoverished aristocrat
NUNO his servant
PEDRO CRESPO a rich farmer
JUAN his son
ISABEL Pedro Crespo's daughter
INES her cousin
DON LOPE DE FIGUEROA commander-in-chief
CLERK
PHILIP II, King of Spain
SOLDIERS and FARMERS

This version of *The Mayor of Zalamea* was commissioned by the National Theatre and first performed at its Cottesloe Theatre on 17 July 1981 with the following cast:

<i>Rebolledo</i>	Derek Newark
<i>La Chispa</i>	Yvonne Bryceland
<i>Sergeant</i>	Michael Beint
<i>Captain Don Alvaro De Ataide</i>	Daniel Massey
<i>Don Mendo</i>	Daniel Thorndike
<i>Nuno</i>	Peter Lovstrom
<i>Pedro Crespo</i>	Michael Bryant
<i>Juan</i>	Clive Arrindell
<i>Isabel</i>	Leslee Udwin
<i>Ines</i>	Terry Diab
<i>Don Lope De Figueroa</i>	Basil Henson
<i>Clerk</i>	Nigel Bellairs
<i>Philip II, King of Spain</i>	Nicholas Selby
<i>Soldiers and Farmers</i>	Iain Rattray
	Glenn Williams
	Jane Evers
	Russell Kilmister
	Mark Ward
	Martin Garfield
	Stephen Hattersley
	Robert Oates
	Peter Lovstrom
<i>Director</i>	Michael Bogdanov
<i>Designer</i>	Stephanie Howard
<i>Lighting</i>	Andrew Torble
<i>Music</i>	John White
<i>Dance</i>	Geraldine Stephenson
<i>Fights</i>	Malcolm Ransom

Voice Jenny Patrick
Production Manager Jason Barnes
Stage ManagerHoward Kingston
Assistant Stage ManagersMichael Roberts
Tony Godel
Cathie Coulsen
Sound Rick Clarke
Assistant Production Manager Tiggi Trethowan
PublicistMary Parsons

This adaptation is based on a literal translation by
Gwenda Pandolfi.

NOTES

Scenes

Scene endings are indicated by the symbol <> rather than formal divisions, since the action of the original would have been more or less continuous. But clearly the contrast in the second act between the serene, ordered beauty of Crespo's walled garden and the dark chaos of the forest calls for more than a bare stage.

Title

The original title was *The Best Garrotting Ever Done*. In the 19th Century this was changed to *The Mayor of Zalamea* as a reflection of more refined taste. I like both titles.

Syllabics

Most of the lines are of eight syllables with varied metre. But I've used my ear rather than my fingers for counting. So the word "mayor" for instance would sometimes count as two syllables, sometimes as one—depending on how it would be pronounced in the sentence.

Line endings should normally be ignored.

Characters

Crespo's ideas of honour and good name are not the conventional ones, but come from his heart. His humbling of himself before the Captain is an action of Christ-like implications.

Juan is callow and his concept of honour is a conventional one. He's also confused and hot-headed—he can pity his sister in one breath and in the next declare that she must die. Don Lope's great loyalty is to the army and his brother officers.

The Captain is an aristocrat as well as an officer. The Sergeant is an old soldier, not a ruffian like Rebolledo.

Don Mendo is an impoverished aristocrat.

Verse

Four main verse forms are used by Calderón and these are followed in this version. They are:

1. Lines of eight syllables rhyming abba cddc.
2. Lines of eight syllables with alternative lines ending in an assonance or half-rhyme—abacdedf.
3. Rhyming couplets with lines of unequal length.
4. Five lines of eight syllables rhyming ababa or abaab or aabba or abbab or aabab.

The metre is varied throughout.

ACT ONE

The Road Leading to Zalamea

A Street in Zalamea

The Street in Front of Pedro Crespo's House

ACT TWO

The Street and Walled Garden Behind Pedro Crespo's House

The Forest Outside Zalamea

The Street in Front of Pedro Crespo's House

The Forest

ACT THREE

The Forest

The Street in Front of Pedro Crespo's House

The Captain's Lodgings

A Room in Pedro Crespo's House

Outside The Prison

ACT ONE

*(The road leading to Zalamea. SOLDIERS marching.
Among them REBOLLEDO and his mistress LA CHISPA.)*

REBOLLEDO. Left! Right! And to hell with the rat
Marches us here and there and back
Nowhere to no-place with a pack
And with no booze—

ALL. —Amen to that.

REBOLLEDO. Are we only rag-tag bleeders?
Raddled tramps with gypsy manners
Trudging behind dusty banners,
Grateful there's a band to lead us
And the great drum—

1ST SOLDIER. —For Jesus' sake!

REBOLLEDO. And the great drum for once keeps mum,
And the great drum for once is dumb,
So that our heads, for once, don't ache?

2ND SOLDIER. Don't let the bastards grind you down.
We're all shagged out, and underfed.
But soon we'll have a feather bed
And some grub in a friendly town.

REBOLLEDO. Friendly or not, what if I'm dead?
Or, if I manage to survive,
God alone knows if I'll arrive
To find myself well-billeted.
Towns are all scared stiff of pillage.
Up speaks your old City Father:
"Awfully sorry, but we'd rather
Pass you on to the next village."
"Right," says our crafty Commander
To the revered City Father:
"We can slog on if you'd rather—
For a substantial back-hander."
Then the Commander comes striding
Back to the ranks: "I've an order—
We march ten miles to the border."
We march—that bugger is riding.
God above—to you I'm talking:
If we get to Zalamea
And they try, by force or prayer,
To persuade us to keep walking,
They will take their day excursion
Minus me, for I'll have scurried
Out of sight. NO I'm not worried,
It won't be my first desertion.

1ST SOLDIER. I know—and you won't be the first
Who hung for not giving two hoots.
The old man's as tough as old boots.
All generals are shits—he's the worst.
Don Lope de Figueroa
May be a heroic old fart
But his tongue's black and so's his heart.
Even Satan stoops no lower.

Don Lope, with that twisted smile,
Would send the closest friend he's got
Off to the axe or the garrotte
Without the bother of a trial.

REBOLLEDO. Look—if you want to know what's what—
Just hang about and watch my style.

2ND SOLDIER. You're a deserter, and you boast?

REBOLLEDO. If I'm concerned—death makes me laugh—
It's only on this girl's behalf.
She follows me from post to post.

CHISPA. Senor Rebolledo, you fail
To understand. Let your fears fly,
For it's notorious that I
Can bear as much as any male
And your concern dishonours me,
For, if I serve you, sir, I know
I shall expect to undergo
Thousands of hardships honourably.
Were I genteel, I'd not be yours
But live in luxury and state
With some wealthy magistrate
And never step outdoors.
I'm not genteel. I've teeth. I've claws,
And I've decided that I'll go
To hell for you, Rebolledo
And without grumbling. Why? I'm yours.
Don't fear for me. Just hope for us.

REBOLLEDO. Praise God! I see, who once was blind.
—The flower of all womankind!

CHISPA *(sings)*.
I am
Diddle diddle dylans
Queen of
All the bloody villains.

REBOLLEDO *(sings)*.
I am
Diddle diddle dumpets
King of
All the bloody strumpets.

CHISPA *(sings)*.
Generals slaughtering all over Europe
Admirals battling on every sea.

REBOLLEDO *(sings)*.
Somebody else go and kill the Moroccans
They never done any harm to me.

CHISPA *(sings)*.
Pat-a-cake baker's man fill up my oven
I can eat anything you can bake.

REBOLLEDO *(sings)*.
Pat-a-bull butcher's wife kill me a chicken
Mutton and pork give me stomach ache.

1ST SOLDIER. Silver larks through clouds ascending.
Showering earth with harmonies,

Please accept my apologies
Shut your gobs—our journey's ending.
Here's the troops—you lucky people!
There's the church-spire! Who's for prayer?

REBOLLEDO. Sure this town is Zalamea?

CHISPA. That's the Zalamea steeple.
Let the bells go bloody ding-dong.
As we end our little sing-song
Down there, we'll make the rafters ring
A thousand times a week, for I'm
A bird whose food is tune and rhyme.
When other women weep—I sing.
I sing too much...my only fault.

REBOLLEDO. Until the Sergeant bothers to
Strut up and tell us what to do
Why don't we shamle to a halt?
We don't know how to enter town,
Marching in ranks or—

1ST SOLDIER. —Shut up you.
What's to be done we'll soon be told.
Here comes the Sergeant, and behold
Here comes the Captain, right on cue.

CAPTAIN. Congratulate me, gentlemen!
I invite you all to stay a
Day or two in Zalamea.
Yes, we're billeted! Till when?
Until our General and his force
Can join us from Llarena, and

Don Lope then assumes command.
He'll be here soon enough. Of course
You're all dog tired. Marched a long way.
Well, make yourselves at home. Right here.

REBOLLEDO. Well, sir, I think you earned a cheer.

ALL. The Captain! Hip, hip, hip hooray!

CAPTAIN. Your billets have all been assigned.
Office of Accommodation
Has more detailed information.

CHISPA. I've a weird problem on my mind.
Like a clock it goes on ticking—
What's it *mean* for heaven's sake:
"Pat-a-bull butcher's wife kill me a chicken,
Mutton and pork give me stomach ache"?
(*Exeunt.*)

<>

(*A street in Zalamea. Enter CAPTAIN and SERGEANT,
meeting.*)

CAPTAIN. Sergeant!

SERGEANT. Sir!

CAPTAIN. Lodgings. What's the news?
You said you'd inspect my billet.

SERGEANT. Done, sir.

CAPTAIN. Good man. Tell me, will it
Have decent bedding, food and booze?

SERGEANT. It should, sir, for the owner's rich—
A peasant farmer, but they say the
Proudest man in Zalamea.
An arrogant son-of-a-bitch,
Born in a barn, but got such side
You'd think he'd traced his lineage
Back to the Mesolithic age.

CAPTAIN. Rich? He's entitled to some pride.
So, it's a farmhouse where I'll stay?

SERGEANT. Mansion, sir. The epitome
Of all your quarters ought to be.
Palatial, sir. But I should say
I did not pick this Xanadhu
For architecture, but because
A lady lives behind its doors,
A really beautiful young—

CAPTAIN. —Who?

SERGEANT. His daughter, sir.

CAPTAIN. A pig's a pig.
Sergeant, a girl who's peasant-born
May be vain, but she's peasant-spawn—
Malformed red hands and feet too big.

SERGEANT. You're a minority of one.

CAPTAIN. I'm wrong?

SERGEANT. No, sir, let's say that I'm
Sure there's no way of killing time
Better than—doing it for fun,
With no love guff. A patch of grass,
A bottle and a loaf or two
And a ripe peasant princess who
Can't tell her elbow from her arse.

CAPTAIN. Rustic frolicking's a sport
For oafs. To arouse my passion
She must be dressed in the fashion,
Elegant enough for the court—
Otherwise I couldn't lower
My high standards to the sewer.

SERGEANT. Personally, sir, I'd screw her
If I thought she was a goer.
If you won't, I will. Let's inspect
These digs, then get dug in. Let's go.

CAPTAIN. Sergeant, I think you ought to know
Your attitude is incorrect,
For, when a man is passion-swayed
And sees his loved one walking by
He says "My Lady" with a sigh.
He does not say "My dairy-maid."
Ladies are, for the man of taste,
Artistic objects to acquire.
One peasant piece—and his entire
Collection is at once debased.
But what's that clatter?

NUNO. Fodder would be even better.

DON MENDO. Have you unleashed my greyhounds yet?

NUNO. Wait until I've warned the butcher.

DON MENDO. I must show that I've dined richly.
Nuno! My toothpick! No, the gold one.

NUNO. Sorry, sir, we traded that one
For that rabbit from those children.

DON MENDO. If there's one man in all Europe
Who maintains I've had no dinner,
I will challenge him to fight
And with arms maintain my honour.

NUNO. Isn't it fairer to maintain
Your humble servant?

DON MENDO. Sir, you jest.
Inform me: have militia
Descended on this township?

NUNO. Yes.

DON MENDO. Now my compassion fountains up
For the poor, whose skimpy rations
Will be purloined.

NUNO. I'm sorry for
Those who have no expectations.

