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Dramatic Publishing

The Marvelous Playbill

A Comedy in One Act
after Miguel Cervantes'
"El Retablo de las Maravillas"

by
TIM KELLY



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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TIM KELLY

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(THE MARVELOUS PLAYBILL)

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THE MARVELOUS PLAYBILL

A Comedy in One Act

For Four Men, Eight Women, Extras if desired

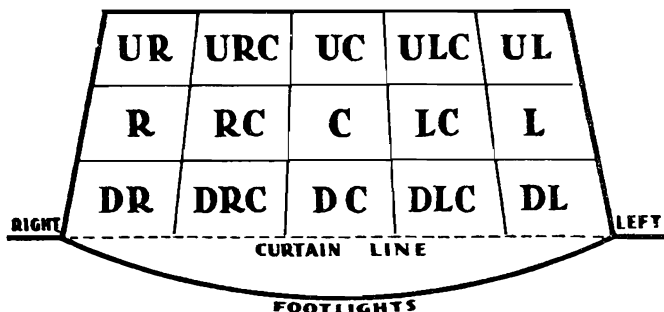
CHARACTERS

CHANFALLA... *a small-time theatrical producer,
trickster and con man*
CARMEN..... *his wife*
JOSEFINA..... *his daughter*
MAYOR..... *a man of self-importance*
ARMANDA..... *his unpleasant daughter*
ESPERANZA..... *another unpleasant daughter*
DOÑA MARTA..... *his haughty wife*
YOUNG WOMAN..... *a dim-witted citizen*
ALICIA..... *her chaperon*
RAGBAG..... *a drama critic*
WOULD-BE-LADY.... *formerly a tender of goats,
now a wealthy widow*
CAPTAIN..... *an army officer*
EXTRAS: Townspeople, Soldiers, Vendors, etc.

PLACE: *A meadow in Castile, Spain.*

TIME: *Sixteenth Century.*

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: UR for *up right*, RC for *right center*, DLC for *down left center*, etc. A territory designated on the stage refers to a general area, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

The Marvelous Playbill

SCENE: A meadow in the Province of Castile.)

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: The stage is empty and remains so for some moments. From offstage R, comes the thin rattle of a tambourine. It grows louder as CARMEN approaches and then enters. She gives the tambourine a final tap with her knuckles and surveys the audience. She's unimpressed. Her attention shifts to the meadow. Hands on hips she walks about shaking her head angrily.)

CARMEN (calling off R). Chanfalla! Chanfalla, this time you've gone too far! (She walks toward L and peers off L.) And Josefina, who knows what's become of her? Probably run off. Can't say I blame her. (Turning.) Chanfalla!

(CHANFALLA, the husband of CARMEN, enters from R, puffing and quite out of breath. He's a theatrical producer, a charlatan and occasional crook. When he's in full bloom CHANFALLA is flamboyant and persuasive. Now he's exhausted from his long hike. CARMEN moves toward him.)

CARMEN. This time, my husband, you've outwitted yourself. Our daughter has obviously run away. She's clever. I wish I had her good sense. Look at you. Covered with sweat, puff-

ing like a mule! What makes you think the citizens of Castile will prove good pickings? That's what you promised. (Mimicking her husband, her voice booming.) When they know the famous producer, Chanfalla The Great, will present for one performance only, his masterpiece, "The Marvelous Playbill," they will flock to the theatre with their gold and admiration. (Accusingly.) Your very words. (Looking around.) This is your idea of a theatre? This meadow! I'll tell you what it is-- it's journey's end. We're finished.

CHANFALLA (flatly). Carmen.

CARMEN. Yes?

CHANFALLA (flatter still). Shut up.

CARMEN. That's so like you, Chanfalla! With the sky about to drop on our heads you only say shut up. All right--I'll shut up.

CHANFALLA (sitting wearily on the ground). Carmen, you are a terrible liar.

CARMEN. In Majorca, the authorities take our wagons for back taxes. In Valencia, we lose the horses to pay our hotel bill. Our actors deserted in Toledo.

CHANFALLA. That's the trouble with the world today--too many critics.

CARMEN. With no scenery, no musicians, no performers, we present a new attraction, "The Marvelous Playbill."

CHANFALLA. It will make our fortune.

CARMEN (calming down). I've never heard of it. Chanfalla, you'd better be careful. I understand the authorities here in Castile are very severe with petty thieves.

CHANFALLA (jumping to his feet). Petty thieves!

CARMEN. Remember the damp jail cells in Madrid after you sold the potion to cure baldness--the

one that grew warts.

CHANFALLA. A minor miscalculation. (From off L comes the sound of a drum.)

CARMEN. Listen.

CHANFALLA. So. Josefina has run off, has she?

(JOSEFINA enters with a drum, as tired as her father.)

CHANFALLA. What success?

JOSEFINA (a shrug of her shoulders). Who knows?

CHANFALLA. Did you announce exactly what I told you?

JOSEFINA. Of course. Is there anything to eat?

CARMEN. Eat? To eat one must have money--a simple fact of life your father has never understood. (To CHANFALLA.) What was she to announce?

JOSEFINA. "The Marvelous Playbill." What else?

CHANFALLA. You mentioned the requirement? (JOSEFINA nods yes. To CARMEN.) You see, my pet, this newest attraction is not for just any eyes.

CARMEN. You've been out in the sun too long.

CHANFALLA. These Castillians are a haughty lot. Vain, arrogant, deluded.

JOSEFINA. I'm hungry!

CARMEN (to CHANFALLA). What delusion?

(As CARMEN speaks a pompous man [the MAYOR] enters from L, looking around rather bewildered. At once CHANFALLA, CARMEN and JOSEFINA perk up. The man may be a customer.)

CHANFALLA (moving toward man). Ah, what have we here? You look lost, my good sir. May I be of some assistance? (Chanfalla's manner

is now that of the showman: outgoing and flowery.)

MAYOR. There must be some mistake. I've misunderstood. I was told that a theatre had come to town. Chanfalla's Theatre.

CHANFALLA. There is no mistake and you have not misunderstood. (A sweeping bow.) Chanfalla The Great--at your service.

MAYOR. You are Señor Chanfalla?

CHANFALLA. One and the same.

MAYOR. My wife heard that a performance full of the strangest marvels was to be presented.

CHANFALLA. For a select few. Might I inquire, sir, your position?

MAYOR. I am the mayor. (CARMEN moves R, her hands to her temples, moaning and groaning.)

CARMEN. Disaster! Ruin! (JOSEFINA moves to comfort her mother.)

MAYOR. Is the woman ill?

CHANFALLA. No, she's an actress. She's rehearsing. (Carmen's wails subside.) Your presence here is, indeed, an honor, your Honor.

MAYOR. I'm warning you--if this is some gypsy trick. . . .

CHANFALLA. Chanfalla The Great has no need of trickery or deceit.

(From off L comes the sound of girls' voices. The mayor's daughters, ARMANDA and ESPERANZA, enter. They're unpleasant, unruly youngsters, and most unattractive.)

ARMANDA (louder of the two). It is true, anyone can come.

ESPERANZA. It isn't.

ARMANDA. It is!

MAYOR. Stop that bickering.

ESPERANZA. Armanda says anyone can come to the performance and I know that isn't true. The announcement said----

ARMANDA. I've got ears! I heard what the girl was yelling in the street!

CHANFALLA. Perhaps I can help. It is perfectly true that anyone can attend the performance----

ARMANDA (sticking her tongue out at ESPERANZA). Aha, I was right!

CHANFALLA. But not everyone will be able to see it.

(DOÑA MARTA, the mayor's ugly wife, enters. She's a haughty creature with her nose in the air.)

DOÑA MARTA. I want the best seat in the house. Overlooking the stage, if possible. Don't have the orchestra play too loud. I have a very fragile head. (Stage positions should be roughly as follows: CARMEN is R, JOSEFINA beside her. CHANFALLA is C, down somewhat. Next comes the MAYOR, then ARMANDA and ESPERANZA. DOÑA MARTA is D L.)

MAYOR (to CHANFALLA). My wife, Doña Marta.
CHANFALLA (another deep bow). A vision of charm and grace.

DOÑA MARTA. It's refreshing in these cynical days to meet a man who's not afraid to speak the truth.

CHANFALLA (another bow). Gracious Doña Marta.

(A YOUNG WOMAN wanders in from R, looking around in bewilderment. She's a silly thing, but just as haughty as DOÑA MARTA.)

YOUNG WOMAN (to CARMEN). Excuse me, ladies,

but I wonder--could you direct me to the theatre of Chanfalla The Great?

CARMEN (a gesture to the empty space). You're here.

YOUNG WOMAN (giggling). This is nothing but a meadow and--(Pointing to the MAYOR, DOÑA MARTA, ARMANDA and ESPERANZA.)--are those the acrobats? (MAYOR, DOÑA MARTA, ARMANDA and ESPERANZA all turn and look off L. Slowly, it dawns on them that the YOUNG WOMAN is referring to them. They turn back, stunned.)

ESPERANZA (shocked). Papa, she means us!

DOÑA MARTA (a lorgnette to her eyes). Good heavens, I know the creature. An impossible social climber. She doesn't talk, she giggles, has the brain of a parrot and the common sense of a glow worm.

YOUNG WOMAN (a false face). Doña Marta, how nice to see you again.

DOÑA MARTA (an aside to the MAYOR). I'm told they keep her uncle in a cage. (Her arms spread wide in a phony gesture of embrace.) Ah, my dear friend--(Another aside to her husband.)--I can't even recall the idiot's name.

YOUNG WOMAN. What a wonderful surprise--seeing you again. And at the theatre.

DOÑA MARTA (a sly wink at her husband as she mocks the YOUNG WOMAN). Where else would ladies of fashion and culture meet? We must see more of each other. Why not join me next Wednesday in a cup of tea.

YOUNG WOMAN (seriously). That would have to be a very large cup. (MAYOR, ARMANDA and ESPERANZA laugh at the expense of the YOUNG WOMAN. DOÑA MARTA hides behind a fan, trying to conceal her glee.)