

intachablemente calibrados con las exigencias de la clásica/moderna escenografía mencionada.

En la presente versión de *El alcalde de Zalamea*, Eduardo Vasco y la CNTC nos ofrecen un clásico perfectamente adaptado a un marco moderno, sin perder el virtuosismo y la maestría de la dramaturgia y el verso característicos de un Calderón que, de la mano de un magnífico reparto y unas interpretaciones espectaculares, encuentra cabida en el ámbito emocional del espectador del siglo XXI.

EL ESCLAVO DEL DEMONIO BY MIRA DE AMESCUA. DIR. ÁNGEL OJEA. LA MÁQUINA REAL. CORRAL DE COMEDIAS, ALMAGRO. JULY 18, 2010 (RUN 17-18 JULY 2010)

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In the dead heat of summer the sun beat down on La Mancha, threatening to melt the brain of anyone who dared to venture into the streets. During the sultry hours of the midday heat, Almagro seemed like a ghost town. However once the sun set, Plaza Mayor came to life with theater lovers, young and old, who came to partake in the *Festival de Teatro Clásico de Almagro 2010*. One of the most popular *comedias* of seventeenth century Spain and one that consistently filled the seats in Madrid's *corrales* demonstrated its appeal to today's audience in Julián G. León's adaptation of Mira de Amescua's *El esclavo del Demonio*. Under the coolness of the moonlit skies, spectators lined up outside of the *Corral de Comedias* to attend the puppet production by theater company *La Máquina Real*.



Silvia Rodríguez, music director, left, and Beatriz de la Banda, far left, in *El esclavo del Demonio*.

Under the direction of Ángel Ojea, the cast of *El esclavo del Demonio*, Maribel Bayona, Raúl Esquinas, Sergio Martínez, Raquel Racionero, and Adrián Torreo, transported us to the *corrales* of Spain where marionettes played an important role in the entertainment arena. Audience members, both children and adults alike, smiled and laughed with delight when the puppets performed acrobatic movements of dance and fights, and expressed surprise when firecrackers popped and flames suddenly sprang onto the stage. The music, under the direction of Silvia Rodríguez, played an intrinsic role in enhancing the *comedia*'s festive and dramatic moments, adding an empirical element from the period to today's theater experience. From the second level

balcony the two musicians, Rodríguez and Beatriz de la Banda, guided the emotional tone of the play with music and sounds from their instruments, Renaissance flutes and a Baroque guitar.

The stage, beautifully designed by Jesús Caballero, displayed a multi-leveled portrait of a seventeenth century Spanish veranda. With a switch of lights, the shapes and colors of the stage seamlessly changed moods from vibrant to eerie to portray daytime and nighttime scenes. However, the stage was partially obstructed by the dark wooden frame that bordered it, and unfortunately for those of us sitting in the *aposentos* (balconies on the second and third floors located on each side of the stage), some of the critical moments of the play, such as the balcony scene in Act I with Don Diego and Lisarda and again with Don Gil and Lisarda, were visually lost. Yet, even though the façade obstructed our view of one side of the stage, those of us sitting in the *aposentos* were given a unique glimpse of events happening behind the scenes.

The performance behind the performance was just as fascinating as the puppet show itself. Actors moved with agility and fluidity through, around, under and above the set pieces, often times crossing arms and legs as they brought the show to life. From our seats above, we witnessed the acrobatic movements required from the actors as they manipulated the puppets from underneath one of the platforms. In Act I Scene 2, for example, Domingo, Diego's lackey, entered from stage left to hand Di-

ego a note. However, what most audience members who sat in the *patio de los mosqueteros* (the main floor) and in the *cazuelas* (balconies facing the stage) could not see were the movements required by the actors in order to position themselves for the next scene. The space in which the marionettes moved was too narrow for the actors to cross each other, therefore, they had to take turns holding and moving each puppet as they carefully maneuvered their own bodies under the platforms and around the posts that held the platforms. They accomplished these actions while staying in character; an incredible feat by any standards.

Actors also dealt with typical backstage mishaps with uncanny calmness yet highly animated expressions. For example, Scene 2 of Act III called for the entrance of two slaves. Instead, only one marionette appeared, reciting the lines for both roles. Apparently, though not so apparent to most of the audience, the wooden pole that held one of the puppets broke, leaving the actor with only one marionette for the role of the two slaves. Those of us in the side balconies had a birds' eye view of the incident occurring behind the scenes. It was amazing as well as entertaining to witness the actor move the puppet through the scene as she, with a look of surprise, displayed the broken stick to another actor across the stage. Like a ventriloquist, she managed to inform her fellow actor about the damaged puppet while never missing a beat in her character's

performance as she engaged in dialogue with the character Don Gil.

These and other off-stage 'happenings' enhanced the theater experience for those of us in the *apostasos*. It was interesting and educational, to say the least, to watch the actors' movements on and off stage. Their command of the puppets and their performances were extraordinary. The audience responded with pleasure at the ease with which the well-crafted puppets interacted, giving the actors and musicians a well-deserved standing ovation.

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