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# The Association for Hispanic Classical Theater, Inc.

Newsletter: January 2015

Happy 2015 and cordial greetings from the President and Board of Directors of the Association for Hispanic Classical Theater! This issue of the newsletter contains the schedule of the Chamizal National Memorial's 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Siglo de Oro Golden Age Play Festival, information on the AHCT 2015 Annual Symposium, and news on recent and upcoming happenings of interest to Hispanic classical theater enthusiasts.

The AHCT Board of Directors re-elected Bruce Burningham, Chris Gascón, and Kerry Wilks to three-year terms. The Board would like to welcome its newest members, Ian Borden of the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film, Esther Fernández of Sarah Lawrence College, and Yuri Porras of Texas State University.

It is with great sadness that the board bids farewell to one of the AHCT's founders, Vern Williamsen, who passed away July 29, 2014. Vern will be remembered not only for all of his contributions to the AHCT and the study of the *comedia*, but also for the warmth, wit, and enthusiasm with which he welcomed students, colleagues, friends, and family. The AHCT also mourns the loss of long-time member Shirley Whitaker, of the University of Carolina, Greensboro (*emerita*). She enjoyed a long, distinguished career teaching and researching the *comedia*. She frequently attended the symposium and will be greatly missed. Finally, we lament the passing of Francisco Ruiz Ramón, eminent scholar and historian of Spanish theater, and one of the founders of the Asociación Internacional de Teatro Español y Novohispano de los Siglos de Oro (AITENSO). May their lives and works continue to edify and inspire us.

Symposium 2015 returns to the Hilton Garden Inn in El Paso and promises many exciting sessions, including plenaries featuring *comedia* translator and scholar David Johnston of Queen's University, Belfast, and members of Madrid theater company Fundación Siglo de Oro (Rakatá) performing scenes from Lope's newly-discovered *Mujeres y criados* and discussing their staging of the play.

## Chamizal 2015: 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Siglo de Oro Play Festival

*El coloquio de los  
perros*, Teatro del  
Valle, Cali, Colombia.

The Chamizal National Memorial Theater has selected the following plays for performance at the 40<sup>th</sup> annual Siglo de Oro Play Festival:

Wed., March 18, 7pm: **Fiesta barroca**, Morfeo Teatro, Spain; Thurs., March 19, 7pm: **El buscón**, by Quevedo, Morfeo Teatro; Fri., March 20, 7pm: **El coloquio de los perros**, by





Scene from Morfeo Teatro's adaptation of Quevedo's *El buscón*.

Cervantes, Teatro del Valle, Colombia; Sat., Mar. 21, 7pm: **El amor enamorado**, by Lope, Escuela Nacional de Arte Teatral, México; Sun., Mar. 22: **Villa y corte**, tonadillas, Orchestra of New Spain, Texas.

Director and actor Francisco Negro of Morfeo Teatro returns to the Chamizal this year with two productions. *Fiesta barroca* is an "antología de texto, música y baile" of the period, while *El buscón* is Morfeo's stage adaptation of Quevedo's masterfully satirical prose work.

The Chamizal also welcomes back innovative director Alejandro González Puche of Teatro del Valle, Cali, Colombia, and their adaptation of Cervantes' *El coloquio de los perros*. Gilberto

Guerrero of Mexico City's Escuela Nacional de Artes Teatrales directs Lope's romantic comedy *El amor enamorado*. Finally, in *Villa y Corte*, Grover Wilkins III, musical director of Orchestra of New Spain, presents theatrical stagings of eighteenth century Spanish *tonadillas*, musical pieces presenting "tales of characters from central casting: majas, indianos, theatrical figures, send ups of the marginal and colorful."



## Happenings

**MLA 2015 Vancouver.** The Executive Committee of the Division of Sixteenth- and Seventeenth- Century Spanish Drama organized three sessions at the MLA Convention in Vancouver, Canada, January 8-11, 2015. "Reading the Spanish Comedia Queerly," chaired by José R. Cartagena-Calderón of Pomona College, explored representations of same-sex desire, as well as other queer affections, sensibilities, interpretations, and realities in early modern Spanish theater. "Female Masculinities: Revisiting the *Mujer Varonil* in the *Comedia*," chaired by María M. Carrión of Emory University, presented new approaches to the motif of the *mujer varonil* in early modern Spanish theater. "Cervantes, dramaturgo," also chaired by José R. Cartagena-Calderón, featured papers on original and innovative approaches to Cervantes's dramaturgy on the occasion of the 400-year anniversary of his *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses nuevos, nunca representados*.

**MLA 2016 Austin.** The theme of the 2016 MLA Annual Convention in Austin, Texas, is "Literature and Its Publics: Past, Present, and Future." As the MLA website <http://news.common.mla.org/> details: "Who is the public for literature? This question is foundational to the work MLA members do and to the state of our discipline and profession. The theme invites members to consider the public face of all of our objects of attention—not only literature and other kinds of texts but film, digital media, and rhetoric—and to consider our indispensable role in bringing texts and their audiences together." The Executive Committee of the Division of Sixteenth- and Seventeenth- Century Spanish Drama announces the themes of the 2016 sessions: 1. Primal Scenes of the *Comedia*. Dreams of fathers; repression of women/mothers; abjection; production and reproduction; queerness; *mise en abîme*; rape; sexual violence. 2. Comedic Desires. Comic eroticism; mysterious theatrical architecture; proxemics, gesturing, and movement on- and offstage; propping desire; drag and divas on- and offstage. For both sessions, send 400-word abstracts by 15 March 2015 to José Cartagena-Calderón ([jose.cartagena@pomona.edu](mailto:jose.cartagena@pomona.edu)). The committee is also working with GEMELA to create a special joint session; an update on this panel will be forthcoming.



Rodrigo Arribas (FuSO), Bruce Burningham, Alejandro García-Reidy, and Barbara Fuchs discuss *Mujeres y criados*. Photo courtesy of Susan Paun de García.

**Congreso Internacional: Lope de Vega y la puesta en escena de la Comedia Nueva.** Grupos de Investigación Escena Áurea and Prolope organized a conference on Lope de Vega, October 27-28, 2014, at the Universidad Complutense, Madrid. Alejandro García-Reidy of Syracuse University spoke of his discovery of a manuscript of *Mujeres y criados*, written by Lope de Vega in 1614, and participated in a *mesa redonda* to discuss the play and its current

staging by Fundación Siglo de Oro/Rakatá (FuSO). The Madrid theater company is in the process of bringing the play to life, and plans a world premiere this fall in Spain, along with a tour of Mexico and the United States. Details of the conference are available at: <http://escenaurea-congreso.weebly.com/>.





**El teatro clásico en su(s) cultura(s): De los siglos de oro al siglo XXI.** La Asociación Internacional de Teatro Español y Novohispano de los Siglos de Oro (AITENSO) y Queen's College, CUNY, anuncian el XVII congreso de AITENSO, en Queens, New York, 20-23 octubre, 2015. Los plenaristas serán Ysla Campbell Manjarrez, de la Universidad

Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez, y Frederick De Armas, de la Universidad de Chicago. Cada comunicación tendrá una duración de 20 minutos y deberá estar en español. Se publicará en actas una selección de trabajos presentados. Los interesados en participar deben enviar al correo electrónico

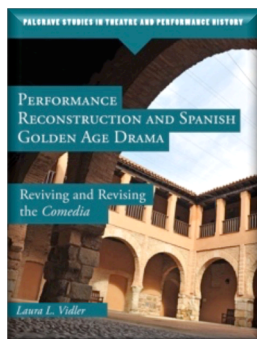
[congresoaitenso2015@gmail.com](mailto:congresoaitenso2015@gmail.com) el título y un resumen de su propuesta de comunicación (en torno a 250 palabras), y sus datos de contacto, a más tardar hasta el **15 de abril de 2015**. Las líneas temáticas a las que se deben ajustar las comunicaciones quedan disponibles en la página web:

<http://congresoaitenso2015.weebly.com/presentacioacuten.html>.

Para cualquier pregunta, se puede ponerse en contacto con el comité organizador por correo electrónico:

[congresoaitenso2015@gmail.com](mailto:congresoaitenso2015@gmail.com).

**Laura Vidler** published a study of the reconstruction of historical staging practices entitled *Performance Reconstruction and Spanish Golden Age Drama: Reviving and Revising the Comedia* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).



(Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

### **Bárbara Mujica**

published the first performance-based anthology of Spanish theater with Yale University Press (2015), *A New Anthology of Early Modern Spanish Theater: Play and Playtext*.

**"Entre Bambalinas."** On May 23, 2014, the University of California Davis sponsored an

actor's workshop by David Boceta and Isabel Rodes, who were both trained at the Spanish Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts and have worked professionally in dozens of theatrical productions. The actors performed three selections from versed plays by Lope de Vega and Tirso de Molina, then shared some of their techniques with audience members and invited a few to take the stage and work on a selection by Lope de Vega. A roundtable discussion followed, affording participants the opportunity to discuss the actors' perspectives on the plays and the value of presenting early modern works today. For details on the event, see: [http://dhi.ucdavis.edu/?page\\_id=14455](http://dhi.ucdavis.edu/?page_id=14455).

**Comedia Performance** dedicates its 2015 issue to the memory of Vern Williamsen, and features articles based on papers presented at the AHCT/Out of the Wings November 2013 symposium in Bath, U.K., which coincided with the Ustinov Studio's Spanish Golden Age season at the Royal Theatre, Bath.

## Reminders

**Comedia Performance**, AHCT's annual journal, publishes articles on topics related to the performance of the Spanish *comedia*. The subscription price for members is included in the annual AHCT membership dues. Library subscriptions are \$30 per issue or \$75 for three years; individual copies are \$20 each or \$50 for a three-year, non-member subscription. Checks should be made out to AHCT and sent to Managing Editor Dr. Gwyn E. Campbell, Dept. of Romance Languages, 406A Tucker Hall, Washington and Lee University, Lexington VA 24450. Direct e-mail inquiries about subscriptions may be sent to [campbellg@wlu.edu](mailto:campbellg@wlu.edu).

Submissions are due by September 30. Please follow the guidelines at the front of the journal, submit articles to the editor and book reviews, theater reviews, and interviews to the editors of each of those sections (see [www.comediaperformance.org](http://www.comediaperformance.org)).

*Comedia Performance* also advertises books published within the last five years, performances, study-abroad programs, and conferences. Ads are \$100 for a full page; send camera-ready ads to Bárbara Mujica at [mujica@georgetown.edu](mailto:mujica@georgetown.edu).

**Benefits of AHCT membership.** You can renew your membership easily at: <http://ahct.echapters.com/join.php>. Members of AHCT whose dues are up-to-date may stream videos from the archive of performances of Golden Age plays, receive the Association's annual journal, *Comedia Performance*, and access the AHCT Newsletter twice yearly.

**Update your member profile.** If your contact information or professional profile has changed recently, please access your file via your username and password, and update your record at <http://ahct.echapters.com/>. If your email address has changed, you may re-subscribe to the listserv at: <http://www.wordpress.comedias.org/comedias-listserv/>.





## In Memoriam: Vern G. Williamsen

June 11, 1926 - July 29, 2014

by Amy R. Williamsen

Polyphony resonated throughout my father's life, in which he artfully wove together multiple melodic lines. Many of the readers of this newsletter will have known him from his work with Golden Age theater through encounters in person, online or in print—the hundreds of condolences my family received from across the globe have both comforted and astounded us. Collectively, these touching remembrances intertwine with the memories we cherish from our years with him.

Born the eldest of four sons, only three of whom survived into adulthood, he relished sharing colorful tales of the adversity he faced as a youth struggling through the Great Depression. After working as a dishwasher to help pay for his studies, he graduated with his degree in Music from San Jose State University in 1948. The first teaching post of his twenty-year career as a public school teacher in California took him to a one-room schoolhouse in the wilds of the Gold Country, where he encountered many memorable characters, from a fiercely independent one-armed prospector who helped him survive a winter avalanche to a feisty first grader known only as "Peter Rabbit." Some of his favorite stories involved his adventures as a Boy Scout Troop Leader camping in the Sierras with underprivileged youths, sharing the natural wonders of a state he loved dearly.

One day on a whim, he offered a Norwegian friend a ride to visit family; there he met Clara Aasland, whom he married after a whirlwind courtship. Fittingly, they marked their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary at a national celebration of Norwegian culture. Fortunately for Hispanism, the high school where he had been recognized as educator of the year needed someone to teach Spanish, so the administration arranged to send him to the immersion program in Guadalajara offered by the University of Arizona. While there, he fell in love with yet another language and culture. Inspired by his experiences, he moved his wife and daughter to Tucson where he pursued his Master's degree under the tutelage of the formidable Tirso scholar, Miss Ruth Lee Kennedy, who abhorred many modern "impertinences," including the MLA practice of referring to scholars only by their last name. In 1965, a year after the birth of his daughter, Tora, the family relocated again, this time to Fulton, Missouri where he taught full-time at Westminster College as he completed his doctorate at the University of Missouri. During this time, my sister and I, witnessing him emerge, exhausted and battle-weary from the forbidden realm of the basement where he "wrestled with the dissertation," became convinced that Dissertation was a monster who lived under our house and could only be tamed by the sounds of our father typing on his Underwood. Once the dissertation was completely appeased, he was hired by his alma mater where he taught for more than 20 years.

In his second academic career, he mentored countless students, empowering them to follow their own passions. He was a favorite undergraduate advisor, for he would take the time to help each student develop a plan of study tailored to talents and aspirations, encouraging the pursuit of many double majors and dual degrees before these were commonplace. While in Columbia, he benefitted from the chance to work with devoted colleagues as he nurtured graduate students who would eventually become some of the most talented scholars in our field. Perhaps conditioned by the strong women in his own life, he avidly supported women scholars—several have recently shared memories of how he enriched their careers whether in classrooms where he included authors like María de Zayas or in conferences where he insisted on equitable treatment for all. At the end of each graduate seminar, he would invite his students to our home, where he prepared gourmet meals that eventually came to the attention of the local press, leading to a feature article about his culinary skills.

His scholarly activity often focused on those whose contributions had been undervalued. From his early work on the theater of Sor Juana to his research on the "minor" dramatists, including his beloved Mira de Amescua, he continually sought opportunities to promote the appreciation of marginalized voices. His meticulous editions and bibliographies, his artful translations, and his countless articles each represent significant contributions. His musical expertise allowed him to perceive and elucidate the

effect of the musicality of Spanish versification, leading to his classic study on polymetry as audible "sign."

A fortuitous invitation by his former classmate Donald T. Dietz to an early festival at the Chamizal National Theater crystallized a lifelong interest in performance that had been rekindled when he went to Almagro during his sabbatical year in Spain. As one of the founding members of the Association of Hispanic Classical Theater, he worked to move our field in new directions, especially those foregrounding performance. He earned acclaim for the successful 1985 University of Missouri production of his translation of *La discreta enamorada* [*In Love but Discreet*]. He also became a cyberspace pioneer, creating a digital archive of *comedia* texts at a time when all encoding still had to be done through the laborious implementation of HTML. He used the website to share generously the fruits of decades of work, earning the gratitude of many, including undergraduates struggling with the intricacies of Spanish prosody. He especially treasured the note from an appreciative serviceman who wrote to thank him for the solace he had found in the literary classics available online from AHCT.



Upon his retirement, he remained active, making the yearly pilgrimage to El Paso to enjoy the Chamizal "Siglo de Oro" festival and the AHCT conference whenever possible. He also embraced the chance to revisit his musical roots. He returned to Tucson, Arizona where he sang tenor with the Sons of Orpheus All Male Chorus, performing at various notable venues, including a concert at the White House and an appearance with Linda Ronstadt at San Javier del Bac. When his health no longer permitted him to sing with the chorus, he turned his hand to arranging, scoring many of their favorite selections. His musical legacy continues through his daughter Tora, a soulful alto, and his grandson Pablo, a gifted young composer.

After 22 years in the Old Pueblo, he and my mother moved to North Carolina to live with my son Erik and me. Here in the outskirts of Greensboro, following a prolonged illness, he died peacefully at home late this summer. He remained sharp and lucid until his final moments; his love for the *comedia* and his fellow *comediantes* never wavered. Once while in a local emergency room, he exercised his playful wit while waiting for test results by searching for satisfactory solutions to translation quandaries forwarded by colleagues via email. On his last Sunday evening, he spent a pleasant hour animatedly conversing with a new acquaintance who had just discovered the *comedia* through the introductory chapter to his Twayne book on the minor dramatists, which included what he himself considered one of his most important contributions to our field: his insights into the dramatic structure of the *comedia*.

When his surviving family (wife Clara, brother Paul and his wife Judy, daughters Amy and Tora, son-in-law John, and grandsons Erik and Pablo) gathered to celebrate his life, we were joined by new friends in Oak Ridge and lifelong friends in Tucson. The cast of characters present represented the many facets of a life well-lived. From professional dancers to bridge partners, from Sons of Norway to Sons of Orpheus, we came together to enjoy good food, fine wine, great music and lively conversation, as he requested.

In a letter he wished to share with friends and family, he summarized his life. Let me end my remarks with his words:

*Who would have expected that the skinny little know-it-all pest whose greatest dream was the seemingly impossible goal of becoming a teacher could possibly accomplish what my luck has brought me? I have lived a longer and more productive life than most others I have known and I wish you all the same fate. Just remember that I was able to pursue two basic interests in my life, Spanish Language and Literature and my first love, Music and, at the same time pass on those interests for generations to come. I have not died since my spirit ripples on into eternity. With love to all, Vern*

If you wish to honor his memory, our family requests that donations be made either to Sons of Orpheus (<http://www.sonsoforpheus.org>) or to AHCT ([www.comedias.org](http://www.comedias.org)).

## AHCT Annual Spanish Golden Age Theater Symposium, March 19 - 21, 2015, Hilton Garden Inn, El Paso.

The dates of the conference coincide with the Golden Age Spanish Theater Festival at the Chamizal National Memorial, March 18-22, 2015. Sessions begin Thursday morning, March 19, and end Saturday afternoon, March 21. The officers' meeting will take place Wednesday, March 18, from 9:00 a.m.-12 noon, and the board will meet that same day from 1:30-5:00 p.m.



**Plenaries.** The Donald T. Dietz Plenary Lecture 2015 will feature David Johnston of Queen's University, Belfast. A scholar and award-winning translator for the stage, he has had over forty different translations from Spanish, French, and Portuguese performed professionally around the world, in venues including the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Washington Shakespeare Theatre Company, the Royal Court in London, the Royal Bath Theatre, and the BBC. He has published widely on translation theory in general and on the *comedia* in translation in particular. Fundación Siglo de Oro / Rakatá is a renowned theater company based in Madrid. The company worked with director Laurence Boswell to stage Lope's *El perro del hortelano* in 2007. They will premiere the newly-discovered Lope play *Mujeres y criados* in the fall. Members of the company will perform scenes and share insights from their current work on the staging.

**Hotel Reservations.** The Symposium will once again take place at the Hilton Garden Inn El Paso/University, 111 West University Avenue, El Paso, 79902, 1-915-351-2121. A special conference rate is available to AHCT Symposium participants; the rate of \$112 applies to single/double/triple/quad rooms, and includes a hot buffet breakfast for up to two people per room. All rates are subject to a 17.5% tax. Parking is complimentary. The group rate applies Tuesday, March 17 through Sunday, March 22, 2015. Reservations may be made online at [www.elpaso.stayhgi.com](http://www.elpaso.stayhgi.com) or by calling the Hilton's toll-free number 1-877-STAY-HGI (1-877-782-9444). Use the group rate code: AHCT. The deadline for reserving a room at the Hilton Garden Inn is February 13, 2015, or until the AHCT block of rooms is filled. The AHCT has also secured a special conference rate and reserved a block of rooms at the Holiday Inn Sunland Park. All rooms include a complimentary full breakfast. The hotel offers a complimentary airport shuttle, and will make scheduled runs daily to and from the Hilton to accommodate symposium-goers. Prices are: single/double: \$99 + tax; triple: \$104 + tax; quad: \$109 + tax. Rooms can be reserved online with group code EG1 by going to: <http://www.holidayinn.com/redirect?path=hd&brandCode=hi&localeCode=en&regionCode=1&hotelCode=ELPSL&PMID=99801505&GPC=EG1>, or by phoning the hotel directly (915-833-2900) and asking for the AHCT rate. The cut-off date to book at the discounted rate is February 24, 2015.

**AHCT Conference Registration.** The deadline to register for the 2015 AHCT Symposium at the regular rate of \$125 is February 5, 2015. After that date, a late fee of \$50 is added to the registration fee. Registration includes conference attendance, the annual banquet of the AHCT, transportation to and from the Chamizal National Memorial every evening for the Siglo de Oro Spanish Drama Festival, and refreshments in the hospitality room after the theater performances. A special registration rate of \$40 applies for those who do not present papers; an additional \$25 purchases a ticket for the banquet. The aforementioned late fee also applies to auditor registration. You must be a member of the AHCT to register for the conference. Membership for faculty is \$65 for one year or \$120 for two years; for students and retired members, \$55 for one year or \$100 for two years; a lifetime membership is \$650. All registration, membership, and late fees must be paid in full by February 19, 2015, or the participant will be dropped from the program. Payment may be made online (registration payment: <http://www.wordpress.comedias.org/2015-el-paso/>; membership payment: <http://ahct.echapters.com/join.php>). Conference updates will appear on the AHCT webpages. For special inquiries, please contact the AHCT Conference Director, Darci Strother, at: [strother@csusm.edu](mailto:strother@csusm.edu).

With best wishes for the new year,  
Chris Gascón,  
AHCT Recording Secretary  
[christopher.gascon@cortland.edu](mailto:christopher.gascon@cortland.edu)

