

Ferrer Valls, Teresa, dir.

Diccionario biográfico de actores del teatro clásico español
(DICAT).

**Kassel: Edition Reichenberger, 2008. DVD and introductory
manual, 48 pp.**

This biographical dictionary of actors and actresses of Golden Age Spanish theater is, unquestionably, a singularly valuable—indeed invaluable—new resource for all students and scholars of this rich theatrical corpus and the working community that brought it to life. The massive digital database of biographical records published in this DVD, searchable on any computer, and the manual that accompanies it are the fruit of a fifteen-year team effort centered at the Universitat de València, a team that included some ten researchers, directed by Teresa Ferrer Valls, who took on this large challenge in 1993 after the death of its original director, Dr. Amelia García-Valdecasas. As Professor Ferrer explains the history of the project in the manual, this collective enterprise was inspired by Joan Oleza and John Varey and benefitted from the assistance of a number of other collaborators, including established scholars as well as doctoral students.

This team of researchers has collated information on all theater professionals active from 1540 through the end of the seventeenth century and first decades of the eighteenth from 300 printed sources, published from the seventeenth century through the year 2000. (The cutoff for actors included was flexible, to encompass the active life of all those who joined the theatrical community by the time of Calderón's death in 1681.) The records center on the regions of peninsular Spain, but include, as well, data from the forays of those professionals in other parts of Europe and even the American colonies. From those sources, the DVD offers us records in greater or lesser detail on nearly 5,000 actors, actresses, *autores de comedias* (theater company directors), and musicians. It also includes prompters, ticket-sellers, and wardrobe personnel, since they may have been actors as well at some point in their careers. Professor Ferrer's team has not only collated but also analyzed the information carefully, pointing out and resolving where possible the contradictions between their multiple sources. Resolving those contradictions and other complications in reliable identification of different professionals and the details of their lives and professional engagements has been no easy task. As Professor Ferrer explains in

some detail in the manual, names were recorded in multiple forms and passed down from one generation to another; places and dates of birth and death were often given erroneously, as were changes in company personnel; documenting their precise and evolving functions within the companies presented other difficulties. Therefore, not only to credit (or question) the information provided but also to assist scholars in future research that may clarify remaining ambiguities, each record indicates the source or sources used. Those *comedia* editors who have previously spent hours, even days, combing sources like the *Genealogía, origen y noticias de los comediantes de España*, Pérez Pastor's *Nuevos datos para la historia del histrionismo*, the "List of Spanish Actors and Actresses" that H. A. Rennert appended to his *The Spanish Stage in the Time of Lope de Vega*, and other records, can now turn with confidence to this one superbly prepared resource.

In addition to data derived from printed sources, the DVD includes some data drawn directly from archival sources, particularly the Archivo Histórico de Protocolos of Madrid. From that archive and others, they include 518 signatures of *autores* and actors, reproduced as digital images. The DVD also includes information taken from an indexed six-volume collection of photocopies of entries in the AHP contained in the *Notas tomadas por D. Alejandro Martín Orega de escrituras del Archivo Histórico de Protocolos de Madrid*, which might help future researchers in tracking down other information of interest in that archive.

Furthermore, in addition to the biographical database, the DVD includes a variety of graphic resources that will enrich teaching the *comedia*. There are sections devoted to public and court performance spaces, stage machinery, and images of the Corpus Christi performances and processions. Each section and subsection as well as each image is either introduced or accompanied by a succinct explanation. The "public space" section offers multiple images and diagrams of the two Madrid *corrales* (the Príncipe and the Cruz), the Montería of Sevilla, the Olivera of Valencia, and the Almagro and Alcalá corrales, this last offering several videos as well as still images. These are followed by two images of the 1623 procession to welcome the Prince of Wales, including the open-air stages for performance set up in the streets; two rough posters advertising *comedia* performances in Seville and Potosí; 24 images detailing theater costumes and masks, some from the *commedia dell'arte*, while the majority are re-creations made by Carmen Bernis and Elisa Ruiz; and images of the inventory of the possessions of the *autor* Gaspar de Oropesa after his 1577 death. The document subsection includes contracts, account books, inquisition trial records, images from several theater manuscripts, including licenses approving performance, and several individual actors' parts. Two portraits conclude the "public space" section, one supposedly "la Calderona," mother of Juan José de Austria, the other the famous image of Juan Rana. The "court theater" section

offers numerous images and diagrams of Italian-style theaters and of the Buen Retiro theater, including several interesting images from a 1758 manuscript of the famous Italian singer Carlos Broschi Farinelli, court musician to Felipe V and Felipe VI, that show the making of stage sets and costumes, paintings of the Alcázar Palace and performances in its main patio and Salón Dorado, paintings and mock-ups of palace garden performances, Baccio del Bianco's diagrams for *Andrómeda y Perseo*, lovely watercolors of *Los celos hacen estrellas*, and 25 drawings of the 1690 Valencia performance of *La fiera, el rayo y la piedra*, which clearly show the *bastidores* simulated scenery in perspective. The section on theatrical machinery, prepared by the scenographers Juan Sanz and Miguel Ángel Coso, shows drawings and photographs of instruments used to create the sounds of wind, rain, and storms; sources of artificial domestic and theatrical lighting; machinery to simulate moving waves, waterfalls, and clouds; and other machinery to raise and lower saints and mythological characters. The final section, on the Corpus festival, includes images of *tarascas*, the carts for street performances, and a section of documents. This supplementary graphic treasure concludes with a section on the theater professionals' guild, the Cofradía de Nuestra Señora de la Novena, initiated in 1630, including digital images, a transcription of its regulations, photographs of its seat in the Church of San Sebastián, and an introduction by Professor Ferrer.

The documentation of the nearly 5,000 theater professionals is copious but easy to search and use. Searches for actors can be done by name, surname, nickname, or company; by function—whether actor, prompter, *autor*, *cobrador*, musician, or wardrobe keeper; by sex, by year, or by word or string of words in the text. This last aspect is particularly useful for locating cities or play titles. Each individual entry is headed by an introduction—brief or lengthy as documentation allows—that gives an overview of his or her life and activity in the theater. Following the introduction is a year-by-year breakdown on the individual's recorded theatrical activity, and in some cases, a concluding annotation of possible confusion with another actor or other unresolved questions. When a signature or other image related to the actor or actress exists, it appears at the upper right corner of the record and can be enlarged for a better view. One can also use the equivalent of a "Find" command within any record, typing the desired text in a box on the top banner and then clicking on "localizar en el texto."

The utility of this DVD for *comedia* editors and most teachers of the *comedia* is evident. Its use is not restricted to experienced scholars, however. To give an example of its interest for students, I cite my own experience with classroom use in spring 2009. This was a literature course for advanced undergraduates, organized around the origins of the "Don Juan" story. Having read and compared both versions of the play as well as other works by Claramonte, Tirso, Lope, and Calderón, as a final project, the students read different articles on the authorship

controversy. Then, using DICAT and their own facility with web research and digital tools, I set them two challenges: first, that of putting to the test José Ruano de la Haza's theory that the relationship between the two versions might be explained by the departure from one company of the *gracioso*, who took with him the manuscript *parte* containing his role and that of an actress he was helping learn hers. Ruano hypothesizes that the *gracioso* then joined another company and re-created a second version of the play on the basis of that partial text and his memory of its performance. The students were to try to document any possible intersections of the lives of such actors with the paths of Tirso, Claramonte, and the *autores* Pedro de Osorio, Jerónimo Sánchez, and Roque de Figueroa, whose performances are documented in DICAT. The students used my copy of DICAT and one purchased by our library to do their research. The more copious documents are not always an easy read for students, but every one of them loved having done this. They said it gave them the feeling they had an "inside" view of theater company life in that day: actors' and actresses' peripatetic lives, the financial insecurity in which they often operated, and the cross-fertilization and conflicts between companies, as actors left one group and joined another and *autores* sometimes sued each other for using playtexts they considered their exclusive possession. The second challenge to the students was that of presenting that information graphically in some interesting, web-communicable fashion. They used Google Maps to accomplish the latter task, in some cases adding graphic images they thought appropriate to the data they retrieved.

Understandably, some *comedia* scholars may hesitate at purchasing DICAT, which Edition Reichenberger lists at 120 euros for individual purchasers and 280 for institutions. However, considering the amount of intelligent man- and woman-hours that went into its preparation and the quality and quantity of information it contains—the equivalent of 25 printed volumes of 400 pages each, one would hope that all can persuade their libraries that the price is amply justified. In my own estimation, the treasure trove of information that it affords us surpasses the importance even of the Chadwyck Healy *Teatro español del Siglo de Oro* that has been so useful in taking us beyond the standard repertoire of much-analyzed canonical dramas.

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