



In the John J. Conklin Theatre
Gail Asper Performing Arts Hall 3rd Floor,
Taché Hall, 162 Dafoe Road
University of Manitoba

The Department of French, Spanish and Italian
along with the Theatre program presents
a staged reading of:

CELESTINA

THE SPANISH BAWD

by Fernando de Rojas | Directed by Ryan Ejornson

7:30PM | APRIL 25TH & 26TH

FREE ADMISSION



TEAM

DIRECTOR

Ryan Bjornson

STAGE MANAGER

Kevin Ramberran

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Ami Buhler

COSTUME DESIGNER

Ayobami Bamz Ige

FRONT OF HOUSE

Julie Renata Faith

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

There's a unique challenge presented when directing a staged reading of a play, in that there is only so much that can be shown on stage with limited set, props and movement. In this production, many of the typical limits regarding what to show on stage are negated through the use of select images from Professor Fernandez's database.

With over 2000 images spanning over 500 years of the rich history of *Celestina*, there are many ways that the images can be used. With this production, I chose to use the images to supplement the necessary minimal use of staging. In some instances, the images are used to 'set the scene' as it were, by establishing a location, such as the church. This location is visited a few times throughout this adaptation with the same image being used to show this in place of having a set. In other cases, the images are used to establish levels (such as the iconic balcony scene) that are impossible to achieve in a normal staged reading. The images are also being used to more accurately depict the scenes of violence that are impossible to show accurately with scripts in hand.

Finally, the images served as an invaluable reference for me as a director to see how this script has been presented throughout its long history. Rarely would a director have an extensive database of images at their disposal to use as a reference in researching the play. The database enabled me to see what has typically been done, and more importantly what has not been done before. To my knowledge this is the first time that *Celestina* has been presented as a staged reading that incorporates the use of image projection in this way; I hope you enjoy this unique presentation.

Ryan Bjornson
Director

CAST

CALISTO

Nicholas Groulx

CELESTINA

Julia Florek Turcan

MELIBEA

Becky Rochelle

SEMPRIONIO/SOSIA

Daniel J. Tompkins

PLEBERIO/ELICIA/ALISA

PAUL DUNCAN

THE CHALLENGE OF STAGING *CELESTINA*

Celestina, a tragicomedy to hear and see.

Our performance of this Spanish story of love, betrayal and death is faithful to its originally intended mode of delivery at the University of Salamanca, Spain, in the late 15th century: a dramatized reading by a small group of friends within the university confines. At the same time, our performance takes full advantage of the rich imagery that, starting with its first printed edition in 1499, illustrated the entertaining plot with woodcuts and, in the following five centuries, resulted in hundreds of images, including paintings by Goya and Picasso.

In the prefatory letter that Fernando de Rojas (1465-1541) added to later editions of his *Celestina*, he wrote that, when he studied law at the University of Salamanca, he ran into some "papers" with the first act of what later would be *Celestina*, which he finished during fifteen days of school vacation. Whether this statement is true or if we are dealing here with some form of authorial modesty has been debated by the critics. Assuming that Rojas' statement is true, as many of the critics are inclined to believe today, the first act of *Celestina* was an incomplete humanistic comedy, the product of a very learned person. *Celestina* is born then as dramatic literature written to be read aloud, *viva voce*, by one or several persons in front of a small audience, rather than to be performed by actors on stage. In 1501, Proaza, its first editor, added six stanzas that are descriptively headed as "On how to read this tragicomedia: if you want to move your audience / when you are reading this play / make sure you know how to mutter, / to talk with joy, or with hope and passion, / sometimes as if you were irate and disturbed. / Assume all kind of voices and tones, / when asking or answering, / laugh and cry at the right moment".

Although *Celestina* was meant to be read and not staged with conventional actors on stage, images accompanied the story from early on. The reputed first edition (Burgos, 1499) was illustrated with seventeen engravings and provided a model for the publication of many other illustrated editions in the sixteenth century. These early illustrated editions and others that followed are only part of the graphic legacy of *Celestina*. As the character of the procuress Celestina became a prototype, etchings and paintings of Celestina and of "Celestinas"—the word having become eponymous for a procuress or madam of a brothel or bawdy house in Spanish—were produced beginning in the early 17th century and up to our day. In our performance we will make use of these images, projecting them as background for the dramatized reading. This way, the audience will be able to enjoy the text of *Celestina* as it was meant while taking a journey over five hundred years of imagining *Celestina*.

This presentation was made possible by a SSHRC Knowledge Mobilization Grant Program (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) & the SSHRC Insight Grant 500 "Years of Visual Culture of *Celestina*". We invite you to keep learning about *Celestina* and its images at <http://en.celestinavisual.org>

Enrique Fernandez

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CelestinaVisual.org is a database of the visual culture of *Celestina* that contains images from illustrated editions, theatrical performances, screen adaptations, paintings, and other artistic work inspired by the celestinesca tradition.



A variation of the scene of act VII of the Zaragoza, 1545 edition. Celestina speaking with Pármeno at Areúsa's door, while she is lying in bed. Note that in this version, different from the image in Zaragoza, that the couple in bed are not represented in the moment of consummating the sexual act.

SPECIAL THANKS

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