



Laurence Burns

## AT HIS ROPE'S END

Honor, infamy and justice are the heady topics explored in *The Mayor of Zalamea*, Pedro Calderon de la Barca's 17th century drama currently running at the Folger Theatre in Washington, D.C. Director Michael Bogdanov, associate director of London's National Theatre, recreates his critically acclaimed 1981 National production in this American premiere of the work. As in many of Calderon's plays, *The Mayor*—subtitled "The Best Garrotting Ever Done"—exposes the clash of values between the peasant and aristocratic classes of his contemporary Spain, complete with liberal doses of humor and bloodshed. Above, Daniel Massey as rapacious Captain don Alvaro de Ataide is about to pay for his crimes against the Mayor's daughter.

Jim Volz, the theatre's managing director, expressed the company's astonishment at the loss: "It's like losing a DaVinci or Monet painting that can't be replaced." The 12-year supply of elaborate costumes, fashioned by volunteers from the Alabama Shakespeare Festival Guild, was housed in an otherwise vacant school building.

Joining fund-raising efforts on behalf of the Festival was Joan Mondale, wife the the Democratic front-runner, who visited Anniston to hold

a benefit and meet with prominent area arts leaders. Support for the rebuilding effort has ranged from a \$30,000 grant from the City and a \$5,000 emergency grant from Governor George Wallace, to \$10 from a loyal supporter who is working two jobs and living in a church garret while studying for the priesthood.

"We were eaten up with pride over those costumes," said Guild member Mary Hobbs. "It really was a labor of love."

### TOGETHER AGAIN

Early in his playwriting career, Sam Shepard visited Joseph Chaikin's Open Theater and the creative relationship that grew up between the two men bore fruit twice in the past: in 1978 they created *Tongues* at the Magic Theatre, and a year later collaborated on *Savage/Love* while in residence at the New York Shakespeare Festival. Last February, the two met again—this time at the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge—to work on yet another project.

Neither of them had any idea what would evolve when they got together—whether their work would culminate in a performance or even a script—but each day for several weeks the two secluded themselves in a rehearsal room at Harvard and worked. At several points they called in other artists, including an actress and a com-

poser, to join them. Around the end of the month, it became clear to them both that the project they envisioned—dealing with, among other things, a Mormon legend about an angel who fell to Earth in Utah—was much larger than they first suspected. Perhaps it would even be a full-length play. Since each of them had to leave to fulfill other commitments, they left the project unfinished, but not by any means forgotten. Shepard took home with him to Santa Fe, N.M., the nearly 40 pages of script they'd already developed, intending to work on it at his typewriter.

If indeed the project does lead to a scripted work, American Rep hopes that it might have the opportunity to produce it, according to managing director Rob Orchard. But even if that is not the case, it has extended an open invitation to the two artists to return at any time and work further on the project. Speaking on behalf of the company, Orchard insisted, "The last thing we want to do is institutionalize or categorize the project. Our function at this point is to provide a shelter—and just wait and see what evolves."

### PARTNERS FOR 'GILLIAN'

New York's Ensemble Studio Theatre, founded in 1971 to develop new plays and support individual artists, is an active partner in a commercial production, for the first time in its history. Michael Brady's *To Gillian on Her 37th Birthday* opened on March 22 at the downtown Circle in the Square as a co-production of EST and M2 Productions, which raised \$300,000 financing for the play.

EST has retained artistic control of *Gillian*, which began as a staged reading and moved on to full professional production at its own theatre last season. The play concerns a widower coming to terms with his wife's death.

A membership organization, EST serves about 300 actors, directors, playwrights and designers, and operates a 99-seat and a 50-seat theatre. Another play developed there, Shirley Lauro's *Open Admissions*, opened recently on Broadway, but in that case, substantial revisions were made after the EST production, so the theatre did not share in the venture.

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