

# El Phantismo

*By Tony Howell*

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### **DEDICATION**

*This script is dedicated to my grandfathers, Marvin Howell and Howard Oren, who loved to tell stories, and to my grandmothers, Nina Howell and Margaret Oren, who allowed them, and me, to keep on telling them long after they were tired of hearing them.*

### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Three old crones start telling a magical pirate story to Sierra, a bored young woman who soon learns that an arranged marriage has been planned for her that very day! Feeling trapped, Sierra convinces the town loudmouth to meet her intended. Meanwhile, the young bridegroom, Santiago, plans the same ruse with his buddies. When he finally discovers it is Sierra he's to marry, he tries to win her heart by posing as El Phantismo, the dashing, heroic pirate of the duenas' story. Soon, Sierra's girl friends fall for Santiago's guy friends and weddings are planned.

But more than romantic complications abound. The local mayor will do anything to claim the fortune Sierra will inherit upon her marriage; a pirate hunter wants to kill El Phantismo; and a real pirate is posing as the village padre, which means the young couples are not married after all!

It's pure chaos as nine different El Phantimos and assorted concerned citizens search frantically to find the real padre and capture the villains. Finally, the truth about one of the old women is revealed and there is a happy ending after all.

### **PREMIERE PERFORMANCES**

*This play, originally entitled "Pirates," was first performed at Central Noble High School in Albion, Indiana, in April of 1992. After extensive rewriting, the current version of the script was produced at Jay County High School in Portland, Indiana, in May of 2005.*

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(10 m, 12 w, and any number of townspeople)*

### **Male Roles**

**SANTIAGO ALVAREZ:** A young world-traveler returning home.  
He's good-looking and likable, if poor.

**ANTURO VALENCIA:** Santiago's best friend. Tends to like the ladies a bit too much. Flashier than Santiago.

**DON BELASCO YBARRA / VINCENTE:** Don Belasco is the town leader, and a murdering crook. In Act II, the actor plays Vincente, the crybaby sidekick to the real pirate. The larger this actor, the better the villain part works in the beginning and the funnier the crybaby is in the second act.

**DIEGO YBARRA:** Shy and reserved from life in an obnoxious family, but he changes by the end!

**PABLO GONZALEZ:** A sailor that must be played by a comic actor.

**PADRE RAMON / RAUL:** The village priest of Act I turns out to be the dangerous pirate in Act II. The actor must be believable as both a saint and a villain.

**ADMIRALO ALFANO DE LA TORRE:** The heroic and well-known pirate hunter. Requires an actor brave enough to be larger than life.

**EDUARDO RUIZ:** Father of Pia; blustery, rich, demanding.

**MANUEL DE MACHINA / ENRIQUE:** A mysterious stranger in Act I, and a sailor in Act II.

**CARLOS BARRACOON / MISSING PADRE RAMON:** Don Belasco's sidekick in Act I, and the missing priest in Act II.

### **Female Roles**

**DUEÑAS: JACINTA / QUINTERA / MAGDALENA:** These three old women never leave the stage, and require strong vocal and facial actresses. They're storytellers and seem to have great wisdom. They are sarcastic, cynical and not so nice. These three actresses must work well together.

**SIERRA ESPINA:** A feisty, attractive heroine who is bored.

**NINA SALINAS:** Sierra's best friend, longs for Diego.

**TIA LUISA ESPINA DEL RIO CADIZ:** Sierra's silly aunt.

**CONCHA YBARRA:** Diego's loudmouth, obnoxious sister.  
Requires an actress willing to be unpopular with audience.

**PIA RUIZ:** The spoiled little girl in love with Anturo.

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**CONSUELA:** Concha's best friend who eventually isn't.

**ROSA ALVAREZ:** Santiago's elderly grandmother.

**JUANITA:** A smaller role that requires someone with great facial expressions as the part communicates with very few lines.

**ROSALIA:** A two-line role. Usually she is a townspeople for the rest of the show and then steps out at the end for her moment.

**TOWNSPEOPLE:** Any number. Since the town is supposed to be mostly female, it helps if the majority of the townspeople are women. Their presence is important in opening both acts and in several chase scenes. The best results have come from creating definite characters: blacksmiths, vendors, pickpockets, harried mothers (with little kids), old arguing couples, fishermen, seamstresses, farmers, shepherds, etc.

#### **COSTUMES**

This is a poor village. Cut-off pants and old button-up shirts with no buttons and no sleeves work well for the men. Use a lot of brown/tan/whites for the villagers and save the brighter colors for the leads. Peasant skirts and blouses for the girls. In addition, you will need a dress for the Admiralo that looks like Sierra's dress; two identical red pirate outfits; and nine identical black El Phantismo outfits.

#### **SWORDS AND FIGHTS**

The swords and the fights can be as elaborate or simple as desired. Directors should never stage combat sequences that endanger actors or are above their own expertise as a stage fight choreographer. If the director does not have stage combat experience, considering hiring a professional to oversee those sequences. Extra rehearsals will be needed for any stage fighting.

#### **PACING**

All exits and entrances are done at a run unless otherwise noted. Characters must dash in and out quickly if the pace of the show is to be maintained. Above all, the stage must not be empty. Characters should be onstage before the previous performers have completely left. After all, this is a boring village having its most exciting day ever. HIGH ENERGY.

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**SET**

This one-set show takes place entirely during one day in the town square of a small Caribbean village. Two buildings, one fountain, and a small wall make up the entire set. The fountain sits center stage, and is more a town well. Stage right of the communal watering hole is the church. This is a large building and should have a large second-story window or balcony. There is one door in the church underneath the balcony or window. Entrances need to be made both on the downstage and upstage side of the church, as well as from the church. On the stage left side there is a second building which is the restaurant. It needs to have a flat roof as more than one pirate stands on top of this building at various points during the show. The Duenas are seated on the downstage side of the door to this building, their bench against the downstage wall. Entrances are made on both the downstage and upstage side of this building as well. A small wall extends across the back of the stage from the church to the restaurant. There is an opening in the middle of the wall. Actors enter from either side behind this wall. This is a poor town, so the buildings should not be elaborate. Nice results have been achieved in the past by painting the set to look like adobe in tans and browns.

The fountain/town well is easily done with a plastic wading pool and small submersible water pump. The pool can be surrounded with short wooden walls to make it appear solid, while a taller wooden unit/post at the back can hide the hose that connects to the pump. The pump itself is placed inside the pool and the water runs up the hose and out a hole in the post to go back into the pool. Remember, this is a poor town so it should not be elaborate. The short wooden box that surrounds and hides the wading pool should be strong enough for characters to sit or stand on as much action centers around this well.

**PROPS**

Market baskets and water pitchers	Bottle of sarsaparilla
Rope	Two red flowers
Huge sandwich	Broom and dustpan
Rice	Four bridal bouquets and veils
Rosa's walking cane	Frying pan
Rolling pin	Feather duster
Sixteen swords	
Three breakaway bottles (carried by theatre supply stores)	
Any props that the Duenas decide to use to help tell their stories such as blue cloth, old teapot, knitting needles, etc.	
Any props necessary to flesh out the townspeople	

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: LIGHTS up on the village square. There are three old ladies, the DUENAS, on a bench, backs against the restaurant. They never leave this spot. It's early morning. TOWNSPEOPLE drift on. NINA and SIERRA enter with pitchers and go to the fountain. Slow pace.)*

**NINA:** Buenos dias, Sierra.

**SIERRA:** Good morning to you, too, Nina.

**NINA:** How is everything at your casa?

**SIERRA:** Fine. And yours?

**NINA:** It is fine. It looks as if it will be a fine day..

**SIERRA:** *(Suddenly angry and changing the slow, average pace.)*  
Fine! I'm sick of fine! If only once something unusual would happen in this lazy little village!

**NINA:** Sierra!

**SIERRA:** Well, it's true isn't it? Nothing ever changes here. Every morning we meet at the same time and say the same things. The meals are the same, the weather is the same and the faces are the same. Where is the excitement, the romance, the adventure?

**NINA:** But we do have excitement! Your Tia Luisa is getting married tonight!

**SIERRA:** Concha's going to be my stepsister! We will be living under the same roof! That's not excitement! That's murder because you know I'm going to have to kill her!

*(CONCHA enters with CONSUELA.)*

**CONCHA:** Maybe I'll kill you first!

**SIERRA:** Concha! How terrible to see you!

**CONCHA:** You'd better be careful, Sierra! Remember, my father is the richest man in Santacilia!

**SIERRA:** And you still can't get a husband! Hey, girls, do you think it's her looks, or her mouth!

**CONCHA:** That's it!

*(CONCHA attacks SIERRA and a major cat fight ensues with the TOWNSPEOPLE cheering them on. Finally, PADRE RAMON and DON BELASCO arrive and pull them apart.)*

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