

THE RESTORATION THEATRES

CHARLES II's return to England marked the restoration, among many other things, of the theatres. During the Civil Wars and Puritan regime severe laws had been in force against plays, and players, although D'Avenant managed to get around them by writing his *Siege of Rhodes* in the form of a poem. But the Puritan rule was broken, and the natural reaction in the field of the theatre was hastened by the King's liking for drama. Thus, in spite of small audiences, composed largely of courtiers, in spite of abuse of passes, noise and increasing expense (due to the English love of scenery), the play houses were back to stay. Only two companies, however, obtained patents from the King. These were Lincoln's Inn Fields (later Dorset Garden) managed by D'Avenant, and the Theatre Royal (later Drury Lane), with Killigrew as manager. The financial difficulties they met with are revealed by the fact that it was believed best to join them in 1682, under the sons of the original owners, together with Betterton, the actor. But dissension soon broke forth, and Betterton seceded with a group of actors in 1695, setting up shop in the old Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre. Such was the rather precarious existence of the theatres even under two such play-loving sovereigns as Charles II and James II.

There were two important reforms in the presentation of plays during the Restoration period. One was the much greater use of scenery. This was a result, partly of the French example, partly of the popularity of the opera. Of course it in turn affected the drama, since the playwright would tend to compose plays in which, to satisfy the audience, there would be new and startling scenes and machinery. Two remnants of Elizabethan practice continued, however, the use of an outer stage or apron and the lack of any curtain.

The second reform of the Restoration period was the introduction of women instead of boys in female parts. Although this made for greater realism, it also had its bad side, since nearly all Restoration actresses were considered little better than prostitutes. There was the famous Nell Gwyn, who became the King's mistress, and Mrs. Barry, whom Otway loved in vain. Among the men, the dramatists Otway and Farquhar tried their hand at acting, but Betterton succeeded where they failed. The playwrights, however, took hints from the successful actors and often wrote parts to fit them, thus accounting in part for the long line of fops and clever women to be found in Restoration comedies. In this period as in any other, the audience, the actors, and the conditions of the theatre materially affected the playwright and his work.

True of those plays? - Love & honour, admiration

THE CONQUEST OF GRANADA PART I 1670; PART II 1671

by
JOHN DRYDEN

CHIEF CHARACTERS

BOABELLIN, *last king of Granada.*

PRINCE ABDALLA, *his brother.*

ABDELMELECH, *chief of the Abencerrages.*

ZULEMA, *chief of the Zegrys.*

ABENAMAR, *an old Abencerrage.*

SELIM, *an old Zegry.*

OZMYN, *ABENAMAR'S son.*

HAMET, *ZULEMA'S brother.*

ALMANZOR, *the brave stranger.*

FERDINAND, *king of Spain.*

DUKE OF ARCOS, *his general. Fa to Admonition*

ALMAHIDE, *queen of Granada.*

LYNDARAXA, *sister to ZULEMA.*

BENZAYDA, *SELIM'S daughter.*

ISABELLA, *queen of Spain.*

(The Zegrys and Abencerrages are two warring factions in Granada)

TYPE, An heroic play of two parts

MEDIUM, heroic verse (heroic couplets)

SCENE, Granada, and the Christian (Spanish) camp besieging

PART ONE

ACT I

SCENE I—(Granada) Although threatened by Spain from without, the peace of Granada is broken by the rivalry between the Abencerrages and the Zegrys. The tension is heightened when Ozmyn, in self defense kills Tarifa, son of Selim, an old Zegry. At the opening of the play the Zegrys come bent on revenge for the death of their member. But the Abencerrages receive an unexpected addition in the person of a brave stranger who says, "I cannot stay to ask which cause is best; But this is so to me, because opprest." He proceeds to challenge and kill Gomel, one of the enemy. For this, Boabellin, the king, who is trying to enforce order, commands he be executed. The stranger answers boldly, "I alone am king of me." He is saved by Abdalla's explaining that he is the great warrior, Almanzor, and has come to help fight the Spaniards. Abdalla's confidence is justified when Almanzor commands the factions to desist and is obeyed, where the King had many times failed.

The Duke of Arcos comes from the King of Spain to claim Granada. Boabdelin, backed by Almanzor, defies him.

ACT II

SCENE I—There has been a battle, in which the Moors are victorious. Almanzor takes the Duke of Arcos prisoner. But, confident that he could conquer the Duke again, he offers to have him set free.

Prince Abdalla woos Lyndaraxa, Zulema's sister. She is promised to Abdelmelech, but says she would give him up for one who could make her a queen. Her brother strikes while the iron is hot, and Abdalla agrees to usurp his brother's throne. Zulema assures him that the Zegrays will support him, and hopes that Almanzor, whose request for his prisoner's freedom has been denied, may be won over.

ACT III

SCENE I—It was as Zulema said, for Abdalla easily persuades the injured Almanzor to join him. Poor Abdelmelech is jealous when he sees Lyndaraxa smiling upon Abdalla. They quarrel, but he is so smitten, he is glad to make up.

Almahide, who is to be the King's bride, presents an entertainment for the court. It is interrupted by news of the revolt of the Zegrays, led by Almanzor and Abdalla. The King posts Ozmyr to meet the foe and himself hurries to the Alhambra. But Ozmyr is taken and Abdalla crowned king in his brother's stead. Almahide begs mercy of Almanzor, who, seeing her falls in love at first sight. When he hears she is pledged to Boabdelin, he longs to tear from the book of fate "that minute when she made her vow." The only favor he asks of Abdalla is that he may have her as his prisoner. But Zulema comes forward with the same request, and Abdalla feels compelled to grant it to him, because of the number of Zegrays he can command. Almanzor is his bitter enemy from that moment, saying "But at my ease thy destiny I send, By ceasing from this hour to be thy friend."

ACT IV

SCENE I—Almanzor offers his services to Boabdelin, and is accepted.

SCENE II—Lyndaraxa, still doubtful as to which side will win, keeps Abdelmelech and Abdalla dangling. The latter, to show his confidence in her, gives her the keys to the Albayzyn.

Selin, to whom Ozmyr had been given as prisoner, prepares to kill him in payment for the death of his son Tarifa. Being called away to aid Abdalla, he commands his daughter, Benzayda, to perform the deed. But she has fallen in love with the prisoner and had rather die than kill him. One of the guards supports her and kills the other when he tries to do his duty. Ozmyr is freed just as his father, Abenamar, and the Abencerrages come in victorious.

Almanzor now has Almahide again, but only for a moment, since she is

promised to King Boabdelin. However, she consents to his asking her father, Abenamar, and the King to revoke the contract.

ACT V

SCENE I—Abdalla comes seeking refuge to the Albayzyn, but the calculating Lyndaraxa refuses admittance to her erstwhile lover. In despair, he goes to seek the Spanish camp.

When Abenamar hears that his son's rescuer and lover is the daughter of his worst enemy, he refuses to consent to their marriage. The two lovers decide to run away without parental blessing.

SCENE II—Abdelmelech gets the King to pardon Zulema and Hamet, because they are Lyndaraxa's brothers.

The grateful Boabdelin offers Almanzor any reward he may choose. He asks for Almahide, but this is the one thing the King cannot grant, since she is already his mistress. Almanzor is furious, starts to take her off, attacks the King, and is finally seized by the guards. He is sentenced to death, but Almahide buys his release by consenting to marry Boabdelin. He is hardly pleased with life on these terms, but finally for Almahide's sake, consents to leave the city.

Abdelmelech announces that the Spaniards have proclaimed Abdalla lawful king of Granada.

PART TWO

ACT I

SCENE I—A Camp. King Ferdinand tells Queen Isabella that Granada must soon fall, especially since Almanzor has been driven out. The Duke of Arcos brings in Ozmyr and Benzayda, prisoners. Ozmyr is sentenced to die for killing a Spaniard but the Queen, hearing their story, pardons him. She is glad to unite the two lovers, saying, "Henceforward safe in my protection live."

SCENE II—The Alhambra. King Boabdelin is having his troubles, for the people have revolted, and demand that he surrender to the Spaniards or call Almanzor back. He decides on the latter course, but does not know whether he can perform it. Almahide seems the only way, and so, with great misgiving, he commands her to call her former lover back.

ACT II

SCENE I—A Wood. Ozmyr and Benzayda, strolling apart from the camp, come upon Selin, fleeing from Abenamar and his men. Ozmyr defends Selin even from his own father, while Benzayda runs for help. The Spaniards come, but at Ozmyr's request let Abenamar go. Selin is overcome with gratitude and consents to the marriage of his daughter with Ozmyr. He then reports to Abdalla that Lyndaraxa will give him the fort if she can

hold out long enough. Abdalla prepares to go to her assistance with some Spanish supplies.

SCENE II—The Albayzyn. Abdelmelech takes the fortress, with every intention of killing all the defenders, but Lyndaraxa wheedles him into preserving their lives. He soon regrets his softness, for it gives Abdalla and the Spaniards time to reach the place and take it in their turn.

SCENE III—The Alhambra. Almanzor returns at Almahide's bidding. He is loath to stay and fight, since he can never win her, but finally consents, asking only for her scarf as an ensign.

ACT III

SCENE I—The Alhambra. The King cannot control his jealousy when he hears of the gift of the scarf. Almahide, to show her loyalty, asks it back. Almanzor is so offended he will not fight, although the town is in danger. But the capture of the King arouses him to his duty and he evens the scale by taking Abdalla prisoner.

SCENE II—The Albayzyn. Zulema brings a message to the Spaniards offering to exchange Abdalla for Boabdelin. They agree. The same messenger tells Benzayda and Ozmyrn that Selin has been taken prisoner by Abenamar and will be released only if Ozmyrn gives himself up in his stead.

SCENE III—The Albayzyn. The exchange of Boabdelin for Abdalla takes place. The Duke of Arcos seizes the opportunity to invite Almanzor to his side, but is refused. Lyndaraxa sets her cap for Almanzor, but finds him constant to Almahide.

ACT IV

SCENE I—Abenamar has Selin brought to him chained. Both Ozmyrn and Benzayda enter to save the old man, and each strives to be the one to suffer for him. Abenamar is finally overcome by so much generosity, forgives his enemy and blesses the union of the children.

SCENE II—The Albayzyn. Almanzor renews the fight against the Spaniards. Abdalla is taken by Abdelmelech who challenges him to a duel over Lyndaraxa. Abdalla falls, and Lyndaraxa changes her affections to the victor. But Abdelmelech tells her he has had enough of her perfidy.

SCENE III—A Gallery in the Alhambra. Zulema's unsatisfied passion for Almahide leads him to secrete himself in the gallery where she comes to mourn and pray. Almanzor has the same idea, and while waiting is visited by the ghost of his mother. It tells him that he is a Christian and descended from kings and warns him to leave this cursed place. But love causes him to stay and tempt Almahide, who rejects all his advances.

When he has gone, Zulema and Hamet follow the Queen into her chamber. Meanwhile, Abdelmelech has brought Lyndaraxa there to humiliate her before the Queen. Suddenly Almahide bursts forth shrieking; the vil-

lains prevent Abdelmelech from helping her and force him to flee. But by the time the court arrives, the crafty Lyndaraxa has concocted a tale, whereby she, Zulema, and Hamet were coming to petition the Queen when they discovered her lying with Abdelmelech. However, the injured Queen finds champions in Almanzor and Ozmyrn who challenge Zulema and Hamet to a combat.

ACT V

SCENE I—Although he has undertaken her defense for honor's sake, Almanzor believes Almahide is guilty.

SCENE II—The Scene changes to the Vivarambla—a scaffold hung with black. The combat takes place in all solemnity. Lyndaraxa has tampered with Ozmyrn's sword, so that it breaks in the midst of the fight, and its owner is wounded. But Almanzor despatches both brothers. The dying Zulema confesses his guilt and the King banishes Lyndaraxa.

Almahide tells the King that she can no longer share his bed, but she also commands Almanzor never to see her more. On leaving, he kisses her hand and the King, observing it, becomes so jealous he is going to have them both killed. But news comes that Lyndaraxa and the Zegrys have betrayed their gate to the Spaniards, so Almanzor is again called upon to save the town.

The battle is in doubt for a time, but finally the Spaniards win. The Duke of Arcos tells King Ferdinand how it happened—how King Boabdelin was killed by a Zegry, how bravely Almanzor fought, how he and Almanzor were matching swords when—wonder of wonders—a voice from the skies warned the warrior not to kill his own father. And by his trinkets and a birthmark the Duke recognizes his long-lost son.

As a reward for her aid, King Ferdinand puts Lyndaraxa in charge of Granada. But Abdelmelech cannot bear to see a traitor rewarded and stabs her; then, for love of her, himself. Almahide has become a Christian, too, and Queen Isabella takes her under her protection. Almanzor is assured that when Almahide's year of mourning is up, he will be rewarded with her love.

CRITICISM

All the faults and virtues of the heroic play are to be found in *The Conquest of Granada*, the longest and most complete example in English. Here are the foreign settings, with almost no use of local color, the ghost and other *dei ex machina*, the chaste but commanding heroines, the unnaturally brave and boastful heroes, and the bombastic, stilted diction. In defense, one should know what Dryden was trying to do. In the essay *Of Heroic Plays*, he says his model is the epic. On this basis he justifies love and honor as the subjects, the use of epic machinery, and even the valor and vanity of his hero Almanzor. When looked upon simply as a piece of romantic poetry, one can see how it had such appeal for contemporary audiences. But even this age of romance-loving and cultivated courtiers rebelled, under the leadership of Buckingham, at a steady diet of heroic plays.