

UCLA Diversifying the Classics: *Comedia* Glossary

Comedia: Three-act popular plays of diverse genres (comic/tragic/tragi-comic) written and performed across Spain and the Hispanic world. *Comedias* dealt with everything from love and gender roles to politics, religion, empire, etc. They developed in the late sixteenth century from religious performances and medieval traveling performers, and remained widely popular throughout the seventeenth century.

Comediante/comedianta: male/female *comedia* performer (i.e. actor, actress). Unlike in England, women performed in Spanish theaters beginning in the sixteenth century, and playwrights wrote huge roles for them.

Corral: courtyard theater where *comedias* were performed. *Corrales* were located between two- or three-story houses and seating was organized based on gender and social position. All kinds of people attended the popular theater, from *mosqueteros* (groundlings) to the highest nobility.

Cross-dressing: women dressed in male clothing were an overwhelmingly popular, though controversial, feature of *comedias*. In Spain, boy actors were forbidden to play female roles.

Cazuela: enclosed section of the *corral* reserved for women, usually of the lower classes. It had its own dedicated entrance.

Autor de comedias: theater company actor-manager. *Autores* acquired and produced plays, selling them to publishers once they were no longer profitable for representation. Women, especially famous *comediantas*, sometimes led their own companies.

Gracioso: comic sidekick and servant to the upper-class protagonist in a *comedia*. They serve as advisors, friends, and social counterpoints. Often a vehicle for *metatheatricality*, or reflecting on the fact that everyone is in a play!

Jornada: act in a *comedia*. There were usually three *jornadas*, performed in one sitting, with short musical or comic interludes (*entremeses*) between them.

Mujer varonil: a female character who departs from the feminine norm of the age – a woman who shuns love and marriage, a learned woman, a bandit, leader, warrior, a usurper of man's social role. Dressed in masculine attire, they move freely through society to pursue their goals (or their absent lovers).

Polymetry: *comedias* were written in verse and used multiple metrical forms to convey different moods or registers. Many of these forms, like ballads, romances, and songs, were familiar to audiences from popular culture.

Entremés: comic short play or interlude performed between *jornadas*. These shorter pieces could complicate the meaning of *comedias*, taking down their seriousness or reflecting ironically on the main action.

Romance (Sp.): popular ballads that circulated in both oral and textual forms, on historical or literary topics. Playwrights adapted the *romance* form, which was easy to memorize, repeat, or set to song, for their *comedias*, thereby reinforcing audiences' connection to them.