

- [9.95\\$ Adobe Photoshop CS5 for Photographers cheap oem](#)
- [Buy OEM Lynda.com - Photoshop CS4 Layers in Depth](#)
- [Buy Jaksta MAC \(en\)](#)
- [79.95\\$ Adobe Premiere Pro CS5 cheap oem](#)
- [Buy Cheap Autodesk Autocad Architecture 2009](#)
- [Buy OEM Lynda.com - CSS Animations](#)
- [Buy Cheap Lynda.com - Foundations of Photography: Black and White](#)
- [Buy OEM Synthetic Aperture Color Finesse 3](#)
- [59.95\\$ Dragon NaturallySpeaking 11 Premium cheap oem](#)
- [Discount - Autodesk Ecotect Analysis 2011](#)
- [Discount - Infinite Skills - Learning 3DS Max 2012](#)
- [Download Autodesk Sketchbook Designer 2011](#)
- [Buy Adobe Fireworks CS4 \(en,ja,de,es,fr,it,nl,pt,sv\)](#)

“And dream we will, for we are in so odd a world that just to live is to dream.” – Segismundo, *Life Is a Dream*

In his aptly titled *Life Is a Dream*, playwright Pedro Calderon de la Barca suggests that even if life is no more real than our sleeping stories, the Golden Rule still applies. Actions and relationships still have pertinence, and the status of an individual is defined by the opinions of those around him. Calderon's poetic 1636 play continues this weekend as part of the University of Iowa's 2003 Mainstage season.

Often compared with classical tragedies such as *Oedipus Rex*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*, *Life Is a Dream*

centers on a tumultuous kingdom in Poland. Segismundo, the rightful heir to the throne, has been imprisoned by his father, Basilio. The king fears the fateful portents (such as the death of the queen during childbirth) that accompanied Segismundo's birth will bring destruction to the kingdom. But after many years, Basilio decides to free his son and make him prince – but only if Segismundo does not lash out at those who have been instructed (by his father) to inform him that his previous life of imprisonment was merely a dream. As the prince interacts with those around him, he eventually discovers it's better to treat others as he wishes to be treated – even if he is led to believe that life was only a dream.

Romance, tradition, honor, the search for reality, chivalry, the quest for the Self, and revenge

Spanish Tradition and the Search for Reality: "Life Is a Dream" at the University of Iowa

Written by Jill Walsh

Tuesday, 22 October 2002 18:00

are the thematic veins that intertwine to form the structure of *Life Is a Dream*. Written to be performed in Madrid, Spain, the play follows a tradition of respect to royalty and honor of women. Calderon was concerned with the psychology of life – the question of the human as an individual, and as a member of a societal structure. Though most of the action of the play centers around Segismundo's search for himself, all of the other characters are struggling to do what they feel is right in accordance with Spanish traditions and with their own philosophies.

Because the University of Iowa wanted to focus theatrical attention upon these Spanish traditions, the designers and director decided to combine theatre with the music of flamenco. In addition to the beautiful poetics of Calderon's script, the use of flamenco guitar and loose, flowing costumes contributed to the fullness of the production. Lights rise on composer David Wilhelm, who begins the play with an original flamenco guitar song, passionate and gypsy-like. He provides a musical backdrop that precisely accompanies most of the action and makes the setting more lush and direct.

Directness is also a strong element on stage. The nine-person cast of incredibly talented actors is breathtaking to watch, especially when combined with the eloquence of the script and strong directorial choices. During one scene, when Segismundo awakes to find himself dressed as the prince, lights fall on the audience, as if he is searching beyond the stage for answers. Played by Tony Bingham, Segismundo is a shaggy, animal-like character, at first full of rage and intolerance. Bingham's ability to control the stage with force – both through movement and vocal strength – is captivating and moving. And Rosaura (Dana Hardy) also commands the stage in her portrayal of the young woman who, at times, disguises herself as a young man.

The experimental set design impressively carries square/box symbolism in every minor detail of furniture, lighting, and stage space. Probably to represent both Segismundo's actual imprisonment and the inescapable boundaries between reality and dreams, the hard edges of every set piece play a prominent yet subtle role in *Life Is a Dream*.

Calderon's play is not a lighthearted romp following Spanish culture. Though there are humorous moments, *Life Is a Dream* is a deep, psychological exploration of the human as an individual, and of the Spanish societal codes of conduct. The University of Iowa has taken Calderon's beautiful script and combined it with intense acting, passionate flamenco music, and an impressive set design. It's a dream from which you won't want to wake.

Calderon's Life Is a Dream will be performed through October 27 at 8 p.m. nightly at the University of Iowa's E.C. Mabie Mainstage Theatre. Tickets are \$16. Call (800)426-2437 for reservations.