

by the Antaeus  
Company  
**Where:** Playhouse in  
the Park, VIAD  
Corporate Center,  
1850 N. Central Ave.,  
Phoenix

**When:** 8 p.m. Friday  
and Saturday, 2 p.m.  
Sunday

**How much:** \$15-\$18

**Info:** (480) 965-5900

Antaeus  
Company of  
Hollywood.  
Back in  
1979, Dietz was  
a college  
professor in  
Texas when he  
first saw the  
plays of Spain's  
great  
playwrights in  
El Paso. The

festival was inspired by the Chamizal Treaty of 1963, which determined once and for all the boundary between the United States and Mexico along the Rio Grande between El Paso and Juarez.

Each March, Spanish-language theaters from around the world descend on El Paso to stage plays by the likes of Cervantes, Calderon and Alarcón. The latter is represented in this weekend's "The Proof of the Promise" (performed here in English). Although Alarcón was born in Mexico, he found fame in Spain, where his comedies ranked with those of Shakespeare. "Promise" is typical of Alarcón's romantic comedies in that it's about a magician who manipulates his daughter's marriage plans.

If the playwrights of Spain's golden era were so great, why aren't their works staged more frequently? Dietz suspects



Courtesy of Antaeus Theater Company

**Bill Mendieta and Terry Evans in "The Proof of the Promise" by Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, one of Spain's great playwrights.**

# Reign in Spain

Alarcón's 'Proof of the Promise' represents golden era of Spanish theater

it's all about politics.

"Spain was *the* world power in the 17th century, so the British and the French did what they could to downplay Spain's achievements. They created anti-Spanish propaganda known as the Black Legend, which fostered the idea that nothing good could come out of Spain. Some of that attitude still exists."

Dietz says Spain's own theater communities bought into this prejudice and are only now overcoming it: "One critic from Madrid came to El Paso and

wrote a scathing article about how shameful it was that Spaniards had to go to a dinky little town in Texas to see the plays of Spain's greatest playwrights."

In 1984, Dietz founded the Tempe-based Association for Hispanic Classical Theatre to promote and preserve Spain's classic plays. The ASU scholar in residence says "The Proof of the Promise" is only the beginning of what can be done locally to help people appreciate the artistic flourishing in

17th-century Spain: "That era was Spain's very own Renaissance."

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