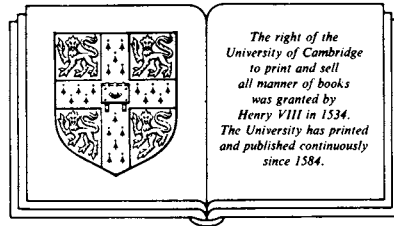


# Theatre and politics in nineteenth-century Spain

Juan de Grimaldi as  
impresario and government agent

DAVID THATCHER GIES  
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS  
CAMBRIDGE  
NEW YORK NEW ROCHELLE  
MELBOURNE SYDNEY

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP  
32 East 57th Street, New York, NY 10022, USA  
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1988

First published 1988

Printed in Great Britain at  
the University Press, Cambridge

*British Library cataloguing in publication data*

Gies, David Thatcher  
Theatre and politics in nineteenth-century  
Spain: Juan de Grimaldi as impresario  
and government agent.—(Cambridge Iberian  
and Latin American studies).  
1. Grimaldi, Juan de 2. Theatrical  
producers and directors—Spain—Biography  
I. Title  
792'.0233'0924 PN2788.G7/

*Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data*

Gies, David Thatcher.  
Theatre and politics in nineteenth-century Spain.  
(Cambridge Iberian and Latin American studies)  
Bibliography.  
Includes index.  
1. Grimaldi, Juan, d. 1872. 2. Theatrical producers  
and directors—Spain—Biography. 3. Theater—Spain—  
History—19th century. 4. Spain—Politics and  
government—19th century. I. Title. II. Series  
PN2788.G7G54 1988 792'.0233'0924 [B] 87-3007

ISBN 0 521 34293 7

The publishers are grateful to the Program for  
Cultural Cooperation Between Spain's Ministry of  
Culture and United States' Universities for a  
generous subvention towards the production  
of this book.

## Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
Introduction	1
1 The Spanish stage, 1800–23	4
Máiquez and the theatre before 1820	4
The apprenticeship of Concepción Rodríguez	7
The theatre during the Constitutional Triennium, 1820–3	10
Bankruptcy and the battle for control, 1823	13
2 Grimaldi at the beginning of the “Ominous Decade”	22
Grimaldi Impresario: 1823–4	22
Grimaldi behind the scenes	31
The rise of Concepción Rodríguez	41
Grimaldi and friends	48
Grimaldi: Translator/Dramatist	54
3 On the eve of Romanticism	63
A smash hit: <i>La pata de cabra</i> (1829)	63
Ownership problems and obstacles, 1824–32	80
More takeover attempts	92
4 The Romantic stage	109
Larra and Grimaldi	110
The triumph of Concepción Rodríguez	118
Masked balls and troubadours: Grimaldi’s final year in Madrid	124
5 Grimaldi: journalist, historian, diplomat	135
María Cristina, Mendizábal and <i>La Revista Española</i> (1833–6)	135
Espartero, the radicals and <i>La Presse</i> (Paris, 1841)	149
Grimaldi: diplomat, conspirator and éminence grise	152
Narváez, Guizot and <i>Le Mémorial Diplomatique</i> (Paris, 1867)	166

6	Conclusion	182
	<i>Appendices</i>	
1	“Cargas que sobre sí tienen los teatros” (Bernardo Gil, 1820)	188
2	Royal Order Concerning Conduct in the Theatre (1826)	191
3	Magical effects in <i>La pata de cabra</i> (1829)	195
4	Bretón de los Herreros reviews <i>La pata de cabra</i>	197
5	List of works approved for performance (1827)	200
6	Grimaldi’s letter to <i>Le Constitutionnel</i> (17-IX-1836)	205
	<i>Notes</i>	207
	<i>Bibliography</i>	240
	<i>Index</i>	251

## Introduction

The story of Juan de Grimaldi (1796–1872) is the story of much of the intellectual, cultural and political life of nineteenth-century Spain. His life parallels – and indeed is intimately tied to – many of the turbulent political upheavals and cultural advances of that century. During his lifetime he was revered and criticized, feared and consulted. After his death he was remembered as one of the most significant figures of Romantic Spain, and he has even appeared in fiction written by authors such as Benito Pérez Galdós,<sup>1</sup> Antonio Espina,<sup>2</sup> and Antonio Buero Vallejo.<sup>3</sup> Still, he remains for us today largely underestimated or misunderstood.

Grimaldi was a Frenchman who came to Spain with the invasion of the 100,000 Sons of St. Louis in 1823. Between that year and 1836, when he left the country permanently and under mysterious circumstances, Grimaldi exercised powerful control over theatrical life in Madrid. He acted as either impresario or stage director of the two major theatres in the capital, the Príncipe and the Cruz, and made important decisions concerning repertory, set design, the makeup of the acting companies and physical improvements to those theatres. He was so influential that he was remembered by Ramón de Mesonero Romanos, one of his friends from the *tertulia* “El Parnasillo,” as being a veritable “theatrical dictator.”<sup>4</sup> Another participant in the artistic life of the capital, José Zorrilla, also remembered Grimaldi as being an “autocrat of the theatre,”<sup>5</sup> and both individuals issued enthusiastic praise for his intelligence, cleverness, clear thinking and impact on the development of the theatre during the initial years of the Romantic period.

Yet, surprisingly, Grimaldi has remained unknown and unstudied. José Alberich has commented that

Those who write the history and criticism of Spanish literature are similar to those who assault an ancient fortress: someone fires a cannon shot and opens a

hole in the wall, and seconds later the crowd of invaders presses through it. Hispanists gather together in bands which work themselves up into a fury over Unamuno, or Lorca or Machado, while in the meantime it is impossible to find a halfway informative article on Manuel Cañete or don Juan Grimaldi.<sup>6</sup>

This is sadly true (the excellent article by Frank Duffey<sup>7</sup> and the unpublished thesis by Bernard Desfrétières<sup>8</sup> are among the only serious works on Grimaldi to date). Grimaldi is one of those authors more alluded to than studied or understood.

One of the innumerable things said about Juan de Grimaldi in the last century was that he “had style”. That style, and his way of manipulating it into power and prestige, is the subject of this book. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Grimaldi was one of the most influential figures in the intellectual and political life of nineteenth-century Spain and that his influence – while for the most part exerted behind the scenes – was felt in very disparate circles. His impact on the intellectual world of Spain was profound. Grimaldi was not merely a successful theatrical impresario. He was, at different and overlapping times during his long life, a soldier, diplomat, politician, journalist, wealthy businessman, historian, dramatist, and civic leader. Some of this activity occurred in Paris, where he lived from 1836 to 1872, but it was nearly always directed toward the country that he came to love passionately and understand completely. He left a mark on what people saw and read, how they reasoned and the decisions that were made which affected their lives.

His intellectual achievements were even more startling, since he had no formal education; he left the classroom for the battlefield when he was merely twelve years old. How did he become that “intelligent and extremely clever” man praised by Zorrilla and befriended by Larra, Bretón de los Herreros, Ventura de la Vega, Mesonero, Concepción Rodríguez (whom he would marry), Queen Regent María Cristina and her lover, the Duque de Riánsares, Queen Isabel II, Ramón de Narváez, Emperor Napoleon III of France, and other figures of the Franco-Spanish cultural and political scene? What raised in him the ire which expressed itself in corrosive public attacks on Juan Alvarez Mendizábal, Baldomero Espartero and the great French historian, Pierre Guizot?

To reconstruct Grimaldi’s life and times it has been necessary to sift through numerous documents and printed materials, many of which are incomplete or riddled with error. His times were those of

Romantic Spain and revolutionary Europe, and the reconstruction of those times is still far from complete. There are many questions which remain to be answered and mysteries to be solved, but the gaps are not so great as to impede our ability to appreciate the importance of Grimaldi as a literary and cultural personality. It is to be hoped that further details will be filled in by future scholars, but the outline of the life he lived and the world in which he moved provided here should give us, for the first time, a coherent picture of a man at once brilliant, opportunistic, ambitious, clever, charming, manipulative, erudite, glib, stubborn, and endlessly fascinating.