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Dramatic Publishing

Captain Blood

Drama by Vidas Barzdukas



"Adventure, romance, comedy and suspense ...
seaworthy entertainment." —The Columbus Dispatch

"Grounded in a harsh history of slavery and embellished ... *Captain Blood* flies high enough with heroic struggle to satisfy theatergoers without indulging wilder flights of fantasy." —*The Columbus Dispatch*

Captain Blood

"Stirring and amusing."

—*The Columbus Dispatch*

Drama. By Vidas Barzdukas. Based on the novel by Rafael Sabatini.

Cast: 7m., 3w., extras as needed for ensemble. Captain Blood is a modern adaptation of Rafael Sabatini's 1922 swashbuckling classic. Dr. Peter Blood is convicted of treason for tending to a rebel's wounds during a rebellion against King James II. Sentenced to a life of slavery in Barbados, Blood falls in love with the plantation owner's niece, Arabella. Like Blood, Arabella suffers under her uncle's wrath, and the pair plan to escape. However, when pirates attack, Blood is faced with an impossible choice: escape to freedom and lose Arabella, or stay with her but remain a slave. Reluctantly, Blood chooses to escape, not knowing that fate will take him back to the woman he left behind. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 100 minutes. Code: CQ8.*

Cover photo: Actors' Theatre of Columbus, Columbus, Ohio, featuring (l-r) Danny Turek and Eliya Smith. Photo: Jerri Shafer. Cover design: Molly Germanotta.

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Captain Blood

By

VIDAS BARZDUKAS

Based on the novel by

RAFAEL SABATINI



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(CAPTAIN BLOOD)

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For John,
my Captain

The world premiere of *Captain Blood* was presented by Actors' Theatre of Columbus on May 21, 2015, with the following cast:

PETER BLOOD.....James Harper
ARABELLA BISHOP Eliya Smith
COLONEL BISHOP..... Todd Covert
HELEN CARLISLE Sehri Wickliffe
MARY TRAILL..... Michelle Weiser
JEREMIAH PITTJordan Shear
WACKER.....Shaun Brown
BRONSON Michael Neff
WOLVERSTONEAustin Wiezbiski
OGLE..... John Quigley
ENSEMBLE Jordan Estose, Michael Galusick
Ben Hartwig, Rex Hughes II, Allison Husko,
Mike Ream, Eric Sarich, Danny Turek

The production was directed by Philip J. Hickman, as envisioned by John S. Kuhn; set by Trent Bean; costumes by Emily Jeu; fight choreography by Jason Speicher; stage management by Alexa Raasch, Hannah Gilmore and Laura Murphy.

Captain Blood

CHARACTERS

PETER BLOOD: a soldier, sailor, doctor, and a man of adventure, intellect, and wit.

ARABELLA BISHOP: niece of Colonel Bishop, smart, forthright, and independent.

COLONEL BISHOP: heavy-handed military leader on Barbados.

JEREMIAH PITT: Peter's friend and confidante.

MARY TRAILL: handmaiden and friend of Arabella.

HELEN CARLISLE: handmaiden and mistress of Colonel Bishop.

DOCTOR WACKER: a doctor in Barbados who protects his position.

DOCTOR BRONSON: a doctor in Barbados who protects his position.

WOLVERSTONE: a former sailor.

OGLE: former gunner in the Royal Navy.

ENSEMBLE: play various speaking and nonspeaking roles as needed.

PLACE: The action of the play takes place in England, Barbados, Tortuga, as well as on several sailing ships in the year 1685.

ACT II

SCENE 1

(A busy tavern in Tortuga. PITT, WOLVERSTONE and OGLE enter dressed as buccaneers. They carry tables and chairs and set them down. They begin to carouse and gamble as if in a tavern.)

BLOOD enters. He is also dressed as a buccaneer.)

BLOOD *(to the audience)*. Now we come to the second half of my tale. We never made it to Curacao, much less France or Holland. Running low on water and provisions, Jeremy was forced to navigate us to the buccaneer lair of Tortuga. It was never our intention to join hands with the buccaneers. But we were escaped slaves, after all, outlaws in our own land and homeless outcasts in any other. Where else could we turn? For many of my brethren, it was the call for adventure and revenge against our captors that led them to their pirating ways. As for me, you might say that I was nearly driven mad by the tormenting lure of the unattainable.

(A WAITRESS enters with tankards on a tray. BLOOD grabs a tankard.)

BLOOD *(to audience)*. Time passed and I became their leader. With every fight, every raid, every sea battle, the reputation of Captain Blood grew and rippled out, my dubious fame reaching the shores of Barbados and the ears of Arabella. What she thought of me I could only imagine. In that time, I also learned that Governor Steed was consumed and destroyed by his many afflictions. His replacement? None other than our dear Colonel Bishop himself. He, too, was consumed—with hunting me down.

(OLIVIER LEVASSEUR and CAHUSAC enter. LEVASSEUR is a handsome, swarthy Frenchman. He exchanges pleasantries with PITT, WOLVERSTONE and OGLE, who react coolly.)

BLOOD *(cont'd, to the audience)*. You may already think me a villain, and frankly, I wouldn't blame you. What I did was unconscionable. But know that whatever ill will you may feel toward me does not compare with the bitter ache that consumed me over what I had done and lost. Arabella was my first thought when I awoke and my last thought before sleep. But I come here not to make excuses, nor to seek forgiveness. You may think of me as you will. I come to tell my story.

(LEVASSEUR spots BLOOD.)

LEVASSEUR. Le Sang! Come join us!

BLOOD *(to the audience)*. His name was Olivier Levasseur, a French captain of a privateer of twenty guns. He had a reputation as a quarrelsome, hard-drinking and hard-gaming scoundrel, which is also why many women found him most alluring. He was the shadow to my light. Against my better judgment, we had also become partners.

(LEVASSEUR and the WAITRESS approach BLOOD.)

LEVASSEUR. Le Sang! Lost in your own thoughts again, I see. Come join us in our revelry, my admiral. We have much to celebrate. *(Indicating WAITRESS.)* Does this one not strike your fancy?

BLOOD. She is quite beautiful, Levasseur. But perhaps another time.

LEVASSEUR *(to WAITRESS, angrily)*. Can't you see the admiral wants to be left alone? Away with you!

(LEVASSEUR pushes the WAITRESS away.)

LEVASSEUR *(cont'd)*. Would Le Sang be interested in a game of dice instead?

BLOOD. I am feeling lucky today. But perhaps another time.

LEVASSEUR. Then how about a bottle of rum to celebrate our last raid?

BLOOD. Very worthy of a celebration. But—

LEVASSEUR. Perhaps another time. It is always “perhaps another time” with you. You are an enigma to me, my admiral.

BLOOD. And why is that?

LEVASSEUR. You are so unlike most men. Take me, for example. You have no woman, while I have many. You save your gold, while I gamble so much I am both a rich man and a pauper several times a day. You drink and grow sullen, while I grow more courageous, charming and handsome with every drink. You are Captain Blood, the most feared pirate in the Caribbean! You can have any woman you please, any man to do your bidding! And instead of celebrating your successes, you sit in a tavern and sulk. The time is now, Le Sang! Life is here! It is now! Embrace it!

BLOOD. Believe me, I have fully embraced the cards life has dealt me.

LEVASSEUR. And then there is the issue of your crew—

BLOOD. What of my crew? They are obedient and disciplined.

LEVASSEUR. That is exactly the problem! They need to be a little wild, a little more dangerous. The name of Blood instills awe like you are Neptune, god of the ocean. Your name should be more like Levasseur, whose name instills terror as if I am the devil of the seas.

BLOOD. My reputation is of no consequence to me.

LEVASSEUR. I don't believe that, and neither do you. Something haunts you, my friend. A deep hurt that seeks forgiveness, perhaps? But you are too proud to seek reconciliation. I see it in your eyes. But men must be haunted by something to be in our profession, no?

BLOOD. I trust you have a point in this conversation?

LEVASSEUR. I grow restless, my admiral. And broke. This last week the dice were not my friends. Let us go hunt on the seas again. Your brains, my brawn—we have been quite successful together, no?

BLOOD (*beat*). Very well.

(*The PIRATES cheer.*)

BLOOD. Same agreement as before. If we sail separately, then the vessel taking a prize shall get three-fifths of the prize's value. The other gets two-fifths. The shares are then subdivided among the crew of each vessel. But what if the agreement is broken? Say a man is found guilty of stealing or concealing any part of the prize?

LEVASSEUR (*uninterested*). Then he shall be summarily hanged from the yardarm.

BLOOD. Good. So we understand each other.

LEVASSEUR. Excellent. Then we shall rendezvous in three weeks time. Happy hunting, my admiral.

(*With a flourish, LEVASSEUR exits.*)

BLOOD (*to audience*). The next morning, Neptune caught the westward wind while Lucifer sailed south in search of victims. Meanwhile, a series of events were taking place in the Caribbean that would have a profound effect on my life.

(*BLOOD exits.*)

Scene 2

(The Royal Mary. An English flag flies on a mast.

ENGLISH SAILORS enter, followed by an ENGLISH CAPTAIN. The ENGLISH SAILORS take their places around the ship.)

ENGLISH CAPTAIN. Set the t' gallants! Helm a-starboard!

ENGLISH SAILOR. Aye, aye, Captain!

(ARABELLA and MARY enter. WACKER and BRONSON follow.)

ENGLISH CAPTAIN. If the wind holds up, we should be back in Barbados by tomorrow evening, ma'am.

ARABELLA. Thank you, Captain.

MARY. I think the trip to Martinique was exactly what you needed, Miss Bishop. Visiting a new place is always good to clear the mind, isn't it? It's a wonder we haven't taken time away sooner. We should really do it more often. *(Beat.)* You haven't heard a word I've said, have you, ma'am?

ARABELLA. Hm? I'm sorry, Mary. My mind is a bit preoccupied, that's all.

WACKER *(leaping forward)*. Does the lady need a tonic? A tablet?

BRONSON. A pill? A potion?

ARABELLA. Thank you, Doctors, but no.

WACKER. We have a wide array of drafts and drops—

BRONSON. Candy-coated caplets and capsules—

ARABELLA. No, thank you—

WACKER. Enemas and emetics—

BRONSON. Syrups and suppositories—

WACKER. Perhaps a nice sedative or serum—

BRONSON. Or a vapor, vitamin or vaccine—

ARABELLA. Perhaps I just need some peace and quiet and space!

WACKER (*beat*). As you wish.

BRONSON. The lady knows best.

(WACKER and BRONSON bow and slink away.)

MARY. Something's bothering you. I can tell. Is it Blood?

ARABELLA. Don't say his name! And why would I care about a pirate, anyway? (*Beat.*) I applaud myself for being a strong woman, Mary, and as independent as my uncle allows. Still, I'm surprised how much I ache after all this time.

MARY. Some pains do not fade away as quickly as others.

ARABELLA. We seemed of the same mind. Did I tell you he wanted us to run away together?

MARY. He's not the first man to tell a woman what she wants to hear in order to get what he wants.

ARABELLA. He wasn't like that, Mary. In my heart of hearts, I know that. We were both caged birds. But when the door opened, he flew off alone, leaving me behind.

MARY. I'm sure he had his reasons. Men always do. Besides, he was a slave. He was mistreated by your uncle—

ARABELLA. And I'm not? And the news that he's now a murderous pirate? What an abominable man. Maybe his life as a slave destroyed whatever goodness was left inside of him.

WACKER (*leaning in*). Well, I'm not surprised. He always struck me as the piratical type. You could see it in his eyes.

BRONSON. Scandalous and sly—

WACKER. Murderous and malicious—

BRONSON. Thieving and stealing—

WACKER. Sleazy and sneaky—

BRONSON. Greedy and rude and way to big for his britches,
if you ask me—

ARABELLA. No! He wasn't like that at all! He was kind, and
intelligent, and passionate. And wronged. At least, that was
the man I knew. *(Beat.)* Oh, why am I defending the man?

ENGLISH SAILOR *(yelling)*. Sail ho! Deck there! A ship!

ENGLISH CAPTAIN. Where away?

ENGLISH SAILOR. On the starboard bow, sir. And standing
straight for us.

(The ENGLISH CAPTAIN looks through his telescope.)

ARABELLA. What is it, Captain? One of my uncle's ships?

ENGLISH CAPTAIN *(beat)*. Pirates!

(The ENGLISH SAILORS yell and moan in worry.)

ENGLISH CAPTAIN *(cont'd)*. Take in the sail and clear the
decks! Gunners to their stations!

(The ENGLISH SAILORS race to their stations.)

MARY. Let us get you under cover, miss.

ARABELLA. No, I can see best from here.

ENGLISH CAPTAIN. They're in range! Ready the forward
guns! And fire!

(There is a blast of fire from the Royal Mary's cannons.)

ARABELLA. No! A splash! Too far!

MARY. Look! The pirate ship returns fire!

(There is a blast of fire offstage. ARABELLA, MARY and the ENGLISH SAILORS lurch as the ship is hit.)

MARY. We're hit! The forecastle!

ENGLISH CAPTAIN. Fire again!

(There is another blast of fire from the cannons.)

ARABELLA. Again he misses!

MARY *(pointing offstage)*. The pirates are nearly upon us!

(A whistle is heard off-stage.)

ARABELLA. What's that sound? A whistle! And the rattle and clank of metal!

MARY. Grapnels! Dozens of them! We're caught in the tentacles of the pirate ship!

ARABELLA. Here they come!

(LEVASSEUR leads the FRENCH PIRATES as they sweep onto the Royal Mary. A fierce sword fight ensues between the FRENCH PIRATES and the ENGLISH SAILORS. At one point, WACKER and BRONSON rush on with swords to fight the SPANISH PIRATES. But as soon as they see the pirates, WACKER and BRONSON drop their swords with a shriek and run off. ARABELLA picks up the sword and fights the FRENCH PIRATES.)

ENGLISH CAPTAIN. Surrender! We surrender!

(The ENGLISH SAILORS throw down their weapons, while ARABELLA clutches hers. LEVASSEUR walks downstage and faces her.)

LEVASSEUR. Don't be a fool. You're too beautiful to die.

(After a beat, ARABELLA drops the sword.)

LEVASSEUR *(to ENGLISH CAPTAIN)*. I am Levasseur, terror of the seas! And this ship is now mine.

ARABELLA. What do you intend to do with us?

LEVASSEUR *(studies ARABELLA)*. Once your cargo is brought on board, I may set your ship on fire ... or I might not. But I shall take you and your companion with me as compensation for the men I lost. You are a feisty woman. I like feisty women.

ARABELLA. And the crew?

LEVASSEUR. It depends on my mood. Some I shall save, some shall be left to the boats. If the boats are not enough, let them swim or drown. I care not. *Allez!*

(They exit.)