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*Dramatic Publishing*

Based upon the original play by María Inés Falconi

# Pedro and the War: A Cantata



Adapted by  
Manon van de Water and Andy Wiginton

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# Pedro and the War: A Cantata

***Drama with music. By María Inés Falconi. Translated and adapted by Manon van de Water and Andy Wiginton. Cast: 3m., 1w., up to 18 either gender. Pedro and the War: A Cantata transports young audiences to a world in which young people negotiate with war in order to grow up. When the village learns that their country is at war, the villagers first continue with their daily routines in spite of the war planes passing overhead. The children play fútbol, pull ponytails, attend school, pick tomatoes and help their parents raise ovejas (sheep). After a bombing raid that destroys the only school, a frightened Pedro finds himself trapped in the rubble with an elderly neighbor, Don José. Through a tender exchange of stories with Don José, Pedro learns about the resiliency of the human spirit and the power of imagination to restore and sustain humanity even in times of crisis. When Pedro awakes in the hospital, he searches high and low for Don José, but he doesn't find him. Was Don José really there? Did he imagine the stories underground? Did he dream the entire poignant exchange? The play artistically peppers in Spanish language from a variety of countries and pan-Latin traditions in order to establish a realistic, yet highly theatrical setting where kids and adults alike learn that even in the horrors of war, the human imagination is a powerful tool for both physical and psychological survival. The unscored songs and loose stage directions offer much creative freedom for a tight ensemble cast. Area staging. Approximate running time: 50 minutes. Code: PL2.***

*Cover: Department of Theatre and Drama, University of Wisconsin-Madison at Hemsley Theatre, Madison, Wis., featuring (l-r) Ely Phan, Karl Iglesias and Yeng Kong Thao. Photo: Brent Nicastro. Cover design: John Sergej.*

ISBN: 978-1-58342-890-0



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*Dramatic Publishing*

311 Washington St.  
Woodstock, IL 60098  
ph: (800) 448-7469



Printed on recycled paper

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# **Pedro and the War: A Cantata**

Drama with music

Adapted by

MANON VAN DE WATER

and

ANDY WIGINTON

Based upon the play *Pedro and the War Cantata* by

MARÍA INÉS FALCONI



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Manon van de Water and Andy Wiginton

Based upon the play *Pedro and the War Cantata* by  
María Inés Falconi

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(PEDRO AND THE WAR: A CANTATA)

ISBN: 978-1-58342-890-0

## IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to María Inés Falconi as the author of the original play and Manon van de Water and Andy Wiginton as the dramatizers in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The names María Inés Falconi, Manon van de Water and Andy Wiginton *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on María Inés Falconi, Manon van de Water and Andy Wiginton, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

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*Pedro and the War Cantata* was first performed by the Grupo de Teatro Buenos Aires at the Auditorio Upb of the Universidad Popular de Belgrano in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

## CAST

Marcelo Balaá  
Cynthia Fridman  
Claudio Provenzano  
Julián Sierra

## PRODUCTION STAFF

Playwright..... María Inés Falconi  
Staging and General Direction..... Carlos de Urquiza  
Director's Assistant..... Evelyn Goldfingera  
Music..... Carlos Giannia  
Guitar ..... Ricardo Scalise  
Costume Designer ..... Lucía de Urquiza  
Stage Designer ..... Carlos Di Pasquo  
Lighting Designer ..... Alejandro Le Roux  
Choreography..... Mecha Fernández  
Customs Manufacture ..... Gladys David  
Scenographie Manufacture ..... Claudio Provenzano  
Objects ..... Fernando Díaz  
Press and communication ..... María Paula Rearte  
Graphic Design ..... María Eugenia González  
Vocal training ..... Martín Sacco  
Video ..... Gustavo Antonio

*Pedro and the War: A Cantata* received its English-language premiere as *Pedro and the War Cantata* in March 2012 at the Hemsley Theatre of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Additional performances closely followed at Taliesin’s Hillside Theatre in Spring Green, Wis., in April and May of 2012.

## CAST

Pedro ..... Yeng Kong Thao  
Don José, Old Man ..... Karl Iglesias  
Don Cosme, Man ..... Monty Marsh-McGlone  
Woman, Musician, Teacher, Nurse, María ..... Ely Phan  
Musician, Girl, Pancho ..... Dominique Chestand

## PRODUCTION STAFF

Director ..... Manon van de Water  
Set Designer ..... Niffer Pflager  
Costume Designer ..... Julia Kinney  
Lighting Designer ..... Erik S. Barry  
Sound Designer ..... Jeff Parulski  
Technical Director ..... James Wright  
Stage Manager ..... Xingning Xu  
Education Team Director ..... Mary McAvoy  
Education Team ..... Aliza Feder  
Lindsey Hoel-Neds  
Stepheni Woods

## CHARACTER NOTES

All parts may be cast individually or played by five actors, including the Musician. The five actors are a Boy, a Man, a Woman and an Old Man and a Musician. The actors have the double role of performing and retelling. When they retell, they are addressed as Boy, Man, Woman and Old Man. When they perform the characters, they take the name of each character. The actors are adults, even if they are addressed as “Boy” or “Girl.”

When performing as characters, the actors occasionally speak in Spanish. When retelling, they only speak in English. The songs are sung in both languages. The live music takes place in between parts of the script as one more voice of the cantata.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

The play is not time or site specific. It is important that the costumes, sets and other design elements are stylized and simple. There should be no interrupting costume or big set changes. If desired, simple costumes and set pieces may be manipulated by actors onstage to indicate a change of character or place.

# Pedro and the War: A Cantata

## CHARACTERS

*(All parts may be cast individually or played by five actors.)*

PEDRO  
DON JOSÉ  
MOTHER (MARÍA)  
DON COSME  
MUSICIAN  
MAN  
OLD MAN  
WOMAN  
BOY  
GIRL  
TEACHER  
PANCHO  
NURSE (MARGARITA)  
SOLDIER  
DOCTOR  
TV REPORTER  
SICK MAN  
OTHER MAN (FRANCISCO)  
JUAN

## NOTES

Regarding the production of *Pedro and the War Cantata* at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the spring of 2012:

I saw *Pedro and the War Cantata* in July 2010 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It was the winter holidays in the southern hemisphere and, following Argentinean tradition, parents take their children to the theatre during this time. Hundreds of performances were offered in Buenos Aires alone, some better than others. I was there for the first International Theatre for Children and Young People Researchers and Critics Forum, and part of our program included daily theatre visits.

*Pedro and the War Cantata* was one of the last productions I saw. Typically Argentinean, it contained music and songs, but unlike the productions I had seen earlier that week, it did not contain red clown noses and circus-like humor. Instead, I saw a sweet, deeply moving play about the survival of a little boy who tries to make sense of why people wage war, and what war is all about anyway. The boy, while acted by an adult, as is customary in professional theatre for children and young people, seemed about 10 years old, the same age as my son, who just started asking the same kinds of questions. As adults, we don't really like those questions—we wish they didn't have to ask those questions; but they will all the same. How can they not when our world is filled with violence and the images in magazines and newspapers, on television and in films are hard to avoid? The beauty of this play is that it is not necessarily answering the questions, but it also doesn't shy away from the very real reality that children, especially those that live in violent circumstances, have to face.

Not in a realistic way, but in a deeply humane and artistic way; *Pedro and the War: A Cantata* is an honest, poetic play that ultimately attests to our humanity, our strengths and our hope for survival.

—*Manon van de Water*

## NOTES ON ADAPTATION AND PRODUCTION

*Pedro and the War: A Cantata* has been translated and adapted for performance in many ways. At the University of Wisconsin-Madison production, we chose to keep the cast small, like the original in Buenos Aires, in part because our production toured to Frank Lloyd Wright's Hillside Theatre in Taliesin, Wisc., where children from rural schools attended the production.

In the process of translating and adapting, we played around with the translation of the original Argentinean Spanish, inserting Spanish colloquialisms from all over Latin America (especially those from Mexico, Puerto Rico and Ecuador). While less authentic to any single country or region, we made this choice in an effort to make the play more accessible to an under-represented demographic in the United States. Ultimately, this choice in the translation opened many creative doors for our team in terms of production design, casting and the musical score.

The original play calls for an accomplished guitarist, which proved hard to find. We had several musical members in the cast, however, so our musician also played some of the minor characters (Juan, Pancho, Girl and Francisco), and the Woman character also played the guitar. Some of the a cappella music was based on the original Argentinean sound recording we had and some of it was altered. Through improvisation, we eventually came to a cantata score that we thought fit our production.

The idea of the cantata is important in the play. A cantata is a medium-length narrative or descriptive piece of music with vocal solos and usually a chorus and orchestra. Argentinean versions of cantatas are often played by string instruments such as a guitar. In *Pedro and the War: A Cantata*, the music is a character and the whole piece functions as a cantata. While the original music had a very Argentinean feel, our music was a hybrid of various melodies, inspired by the play and our actors.

In our production, we had five actors (including the musician), but the play has 18 characters, as well as opportunities for many crowd scenes—the village, the school and the hospital, among others. This flexibility makes it suitable for school productions, as well as large and small professional or amateur casts.

—*Manon van de Water and Andy Wiginton*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to acknowledge Cynthia Fridman for the first translation, Jorge Sanchez-Diaz for his advice on the retranslation in English and Spanish and the cast, crew and designers of the United States premiere of *Pedro and the War: A Canata* at the Department of Theatre and Drama theatre, University of Wisconsin-Madison, for their creativity, improvisations skills and insights, and their commitment to make this production a success.

## Pedro and the War: A Cantata

AT RISE: *There are five actors onstage: a BOY, a MAN, a WOMAN, an OLD MAN and a MUSICIAN. The actors have the double role of performing and retelling. When they retell, they are addressed as BOY, MAN, OLD MAN and WOMAN. When they perform the characters, they take the name of each of character.*

*In the darkness, voices singing a song can be heard. It's a simple song, lively music, celebrating their daily life. It may even be a song made up every day by the shepherds. The light becomes more and more intense as the voices sing.*

ALL.

DETRÁS DE MIS OVEJAS  
VOY SUBIENDO EL CERRO,  
SE MEZCLA CON EL VIENTO,  
LA VOZ DEL CENCERRO.

ESCUCHEN SEÑORES,  
ESCUCHEN SEÑORAS;  
AHÍ VIENE EL PASTOR.

AFTER THE LAST OF MY SHEEP,  
I'M CLIMBING DOWN THE MOUNTAIN.  
WHILE THE SHEEP ARE SLEEPING,  
I'M SINGING THEM A SONG.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,  
LISTEN EACH, EVERY ONE;  
THE SHEPHERD IS HERE.

FALALALALALALA,  
FALALALALA,

FALALALALALALA,  
FALALALALA.

DETRÁS DE MIS OVEJAS  
SUBO A LA MONTAÑA  
SE MEZCLA CON EL VIENTO,  
LA VOZ DE MI CAÑA.

ESCUCHEN SEÑORES,  
ESCUCHEN SEÑORAS,  
AHÍ VIENE EL PASTOR.

ESCUCHEN SEÑORES,  
ESCUCHEN SEÑORAS,  
AHÍ VIENE EL PASTOR.

*(The WOMAN continues singing as the MAN starts retelling. It has a happy tone of calm and peaceful country life.)*

MAN. It was a poor, poor village.

*(The WOMAN sings the chorus under the following.)*

OLD MAN. It was a village where the snow would freeze people's feet in the winter and the sun would split the earth in summer.

BOY. It was a village with a river that was sometimes raging and at other times was only a trickling creek.

OLD MAN. It was a village with lots of sheep ... and few people.

MAN. There were few comforts, and even fewer modern ones.

OLD MAN. But this village was overflowing with happiness.

*(The chorus is sung again by the WOMAN and continues. Then, the chorus is sung by everyone.)*

ALL.

ESCUCHEN SEÑORES,  
ESCUCHEN SEÑORAS,  
AHÍ VIENE EL PASTOR.

BOY. The villagers would work and celebrate all the time, and that's all that was needed.

OLD MAN. Night would come after day, winter after summer, births after weddings and death after life. It was like this year after year.

*(They all sing the last chorus, ending the music.)*

ALL.

ESCUCHEN SEÑORES  
ESCUCHEN SEÑORAS,  
AHÍ VIENE EL PASTOR.

*(Silence.)*

MAN. In this village, there was only one television, and it rested on the old counter of Don Cosme's general store.

TV REPORTER. Gracias, Marisa, and now for the weather. Strong gusts of wind are expected in the South. A cold front is coming from the West and it's due to cause ...

PEDRO *(on the TV REPORTER's voice)*. Épa, Don Cosme, can I watch cartoons?

DON COSME. Ya lárgate! We are listening to the weather!

PEDRO. Listening? Look outside, Don Cosme, just look outside! I can tell you, it's not going to rain for six months, as usual!!!

*(DON COSME frightens PEDRO and he runs out of the store laughing.)*

WOMAN. In the village, there was only one school, with only one teacher, who tried to do her best to teach all the children together ... the 6-year-olds with the 14-year-olds; the ones who couldn't count with those who could already read.

BOY. Two times two: four, two times three: five.

DON COSME. Seis.

BOY (*confused*). Six times six, six times six?!!!! (*Looking at DON COSME.*)

DON COSME (*doesn't know the answer*). Pues ... that must be ... mucho!!

*(The WOMAN laughs and goes on.)*

WOMAN. To continue to study, you had to go to the city, which meant a lot of traveling, especially because the train no longer came through the village. So, as soon as the children could read and count, their studies were over.

OLD MAN (*cheerful and carefree*). It was enough to watch over sheep and harvest tomatoes.

MAN (*cheerfully*). To be born, grow up and celebrate, too.

*(Everyone repeats the chorus.)*

ALL.

ESCUCHEN SEÑORES,  
ESCUCHEN SEÑORAS,  
AHÍ VIENE EL PASTOR.

WOMAN. One day, when all the men had gathered at Don Cosme's store to watch the match ...

*(The MEN and the BOY make comments until they are interrupted by a military drum cadence.)*

WOMAN (*cont'd*). They learned that their country was at war.

*(The music stops abruptly.)*

PEDRO, DON COSME & OLD MAN (*surprised but not worried*). ¡¿Guerra?!

OLD MAN. ¿Con quién?

DON COSME. What for?

WOMAN. They didn't understand what was said very well. They listened to the news, watched the men in suits speak with words that they never used ... They saw weapons and explosions, the wounded and the dead ... and still they didn't understand.

*(Background political speeches can be heard.)*

PEDRO. What's a war?

TEACHER. A war is when people kill each other.

PEDRO. And why do they kill each other if one day they are going to eventually die anyway?

TEACHER (*trying to answer*). To, to ...

MAN. The teacher didn't know how to answer. She didn't understand either.

PEDRO. Don José ...

WOMAN. Don José was a man of many years and many more wrinkles, who was too old to look after sheep or grow crops. That's why he devoted himself to helping out at the school. He fixed what was broken. He cleaned, he painted and he planted flowers. He made tea on cold days and made lemonade when it was hot.

PEDRO. He had even built a little soccer field with goal posts and everything between the school and the old shed.

MAN. Don José was wise ...

PEDRO. What do you mean, wise? He can't even read!  
Where have you seen a wise man who can't read?

GIRL. La maestra says he has the wisdom that comes from  
a long life. Haven't you seen how many wrinkles he has?

*(PEDRO stares attentively. DON JOSÉ doesn't like the  
comment about his wrinkles.)*

GIRL. La maestra also says, "Don José is my right hand."

PEDRO. She can't say that.

GIRL. Why not?

PEDRO. Because la maestra is left-handed.

GIRL *(doubting)*. Bueno ... she might say it because of that.

PEDRO *(going back to the previous scene)*. Don José ...  
since you're so wise, you should know. What is war?

DON JOSÉ *(doesn't have the answer either)*. War is ... Um ...  
war can be defined as ... pues ... when people kill each other.  
That's it.

PEDRO. Does that mean that if our country is at war the oth-  
ers will come to kill us?

DON JOSÉ *(laughing)*. No, Pedrito, no. Do you see anybody  
here who feels like fighting?

*(PEDRO looks thoughtful and scared.)*

WOMAN. Pedro knew very well that he always fought with  
Matéo, especially when they played soccer. Would the oth-  
ers send him to war for that?

PEDRO *(shaking his head)*. Who feels like fighting? Nobody ...

DON JOSÉ. Bueno, es todo. Here nobody wants to fight. In  
this village, we work and dance and, as mi abuelita used to  
say, "If one doesn't want to, two don't fight."

PEDRO. I didn't understand the half of it.

*(Music starts on the WOMAN's speech.)*

WOMAN. The war continued, but life in the village didn't change at all, or almost not at all.

POR LA MANANA PLANTO TOMATES.  
POR LA TARDE LOS VEO CRECER.  
POR LA NOCHE CAE ROCÍO,  
Y AL OTRO DÍA LOS VOY A COMER.

TOMA TOMÁS SUS TOMATES.  
Y TU TOMATES, ¿QUIÉN LOS TOMÓ?  
SI TOMÁS TOMA SUS TOMATES,  
MIS TOMATES LOS TOMO YO.

I PLANT THE SEEDS IN THE MORNING.  
AFTERNOON, I WATCH THEM GROW.  
THE DEW FALLS WHILE I'M SLEEPING,  
AND THE NEXT DAY I HAVE TOMATOES.

TOMÁS EATS HIS TOMATOES.  
AND YOUR TOMATOES, WHO WILL EAT THOSE?  
IF TOMÁS EATS HIS TOMATOES,  
IN MY BELLY, MY OWN WILL GO.

POR LA MANANA PLANTO TOMATES.  
POR LA TARDE LOS VEO CRECER.  
POR LA NOCHE CAE ROCÍO,  
Y AL OTRO DÍA LOS VOY A COMER.

TOMA TOMÁS SUS TOMATES.  
Y TU TOMATES, ¿QUIÉN LOS TOMÓ?  
SI TOMÁS TOMA SUS TOMATES,  
MIS TOMATES LOS TOMO YO.

*(Planes can be heard, everyone waves at them.)*

WOMAN (*cont'd*). Sometimes, the planes thundered over them. Everybody would stop whatever they were doing and wave at them without stopping to think if they were friends, or enemies.

*(The BOY plays with a paper plane.)*

MAN. And autumn came, and with autumn the first cold days.  
And even though the war continued on TV, the children got bored of their paper planes and the adults, of the real ones.

OLD MAN. The only ones still afraid of the low-flying planes were the sheep!

DON COSME. ¿Cuándo terminará esta guerra?

OLD MAN. When will this war be over!!

TEACHER. When will this war be over!!

GIRL *(mocking the adults)*. When will this war be over!!

*(Silence.)*

MAN. But the war would not end.

WOMAN. In the village, nobody knew who was winning or who was losing. But they couldn't care less.

*(PEDRO adding up with difficulty. He is cold.)*

PEDRO. Subtract the one, carry the two ... este ... 22 divided by three is, eh ...

TEACHER. Don José, por favor, get some wood for the heater.

DON JOSÉ. Pero maestra, if we use all the wood now in autumn, what are we going to burn in winter?

TEACHER. No se, Don José, we'll burn the furniture! But the children can't learn anything in this cold. Their thoughts are frozen!

DON JOSÉ *(smiling)*. Pero maestra, con todo respeto, what you have just said is imposible. Maybe their feet are frozen, pero their thoughts!? Are their feet in their heads? Are their brains in their shoes?

*(PEDRO hides his laughter.)*

TEACHER. Don José, who is the lady in charge here, you or me?

DON JOSÉ. As far as I know, you, maestra. I mean, I could be the man in charge, but the LADY, not me, NEVER!

*(PEDRO bursts out laughing. The TEACHER looks at him angrily and DON JOSÉ leaves.)*

DON JOSÉ *(cont'd)*. Voy ... voy ... I'll go ... I'll bring the wood, just a minute.

TEACHER. Pedro, give him a hand, please. We aren't going to waste all morning on this heater business!

PEDRO *(to audience, the TEACHER can't hear him)*. She's not sending me because she thinks Don José will take too long. She's sending me because she knows he's too old to carry all that wood.

*(PEDRO leaves after DON JOSÉ, trying to kick a paper ball.)*

PEDRO *(cont'd)*. It's better for me anyway, I hate math!

TEACHER. Pedro ... the wood shed.

PEDRO. I'm going, maestra. This ball was in my way!

*(Music. During the next line airplanes are heard. They increase in volume until they are very close [loud].)*

DON JOSÉ *(chopping wood)*. I can't believe she wants to light the heater in autumn! Winter won't be starting for another two weeks! When I was a niño, nobody, but I mean nobody, would light the heater in autumn. But now, the children's thoughts freeze! Some education! It's like they are city kids!

PEDRO. I'm not cold. *(Rubs his hands behind his back.)*

DON JOSÉ. Muy bien, Pedro. That's more like a man. Ándale, let's see how strong you are.

*(DON JOSÉ puts a log into PEDRO's arms.)*

PEDRO. I can do it by myself.

DON JOSÉ *(putting more wood in PEDRO's arms)*. Bueno, I know, but you don't need to. Let's try two more.

*(PEDRO tries hard to carry all the wood.)*

DON JOSÉ *(cont'd)*. You got it?

*(PEDRO nods but he is almost speechless.)*

DON JOSÉ *(cont'd, adding a new log)*. And now?

*(PEDRO nods again. Planes can be heard, much louder.)*

DON JOSÉ *(cont'd)*. There they are again. I don't know, if they carry on like this, the sheep will be scared to death.

*(DON JOSÉ tries to repeat his last line after PEDRO says, "¿Qué?")*

PEDRO. ¿Qué? They are so loud, Don José! They're flying so low ... Hurry up so that we can go out and see them.

DON JOSÉ. Cálmate, calm down. Take it easy, Pedro. If we don't take enough wood with us to school we will have to ...

*(Intense bombing sounds are heard. The scene freezes. Omniscient guitar comments after the following lines as the set falls apart and the town is destroyed.)*

WOMAN. Don José didn't finish his sentence.

*(Guitar.)*