

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

A Fairytale Retold
By Dale Ahlquist

Cast of Characters

30 Females; 13 Males; 8 Either

LUCIA:	A Spanish dancer.
MORGANA:	A Spanish dancer.
SONYA:	A Spanish dancer.
CATRINA:	A Spanish dancer.
ANNA:	A Spanish dancer.
MARIA:	A Spanish dancer.
KATYA:	A Spanish dancer.
LEAH:	A Spanish dancer.
ZELDA:	The innkeeper.
VERA:	Zelda's daughter.
1 ST CHESS PLAYER:	A chess player in the inn.
2 ND CHESS PLAYER:	A chess player in the inn.
GREKKA:	A local woman.
LATTA:	Another local woman.
JOSEFA:	A visitor from Vienna.
HILDA:	Another visitor from Vienna.
ZAG:	A traveling merchant.
BLICK:	A traveling merchant.
TYRONE:	Captain of the Imperial Guard.
ARLO:	An imperial guard.
PETRINO:	A short imperial guard.

EMPEROR:	The Emperor.
QUEEN CAMILLA:	The Queen, Emperor's wife.
PRINCESS CONSTANZA:	A princess of the Emperor.
PRINCESS CANDIDA:	A princess of the Emperor.
PRINCESS CATALINA:	A princess of the Emperor.
PRINCESS CARLOTTA:	A princess of the Emperor.
PRINCESS CARMINA:	A princess of the Emperor.
PRINCESS CAROLINA:	A princess of the Emperor.
PRINCESS CASSANDRA:	A princess of the Emperor.
HERALD:	The Emperor's herald.
DONNA FLORA:	The imperial tailor.
1 ST VENDOR:	A vendor at the Bazaar.
2 ND VENDOR:	A vendor at the Bazaar.
ROPE CHARMER:	Rope charmer at the Bazaar.
MOOLACH:	One of the Sultan's men.
ARZABAD:	One of the Sultan's men.
HAKKAMEEM:	One of the Sultan's men.
BAZEEM:	One of the Sultan's men.
AGA:	A woman in the Sultan's harem.
ASTA:	A woman in the Sultan's harem.
AHMBRA:	A woman in the Sultan's harem.
ANDHA:	A woman in the Sultan's harem.
ARDHA:	A woman in the Sultan's harem.

ATHA:	A woman in the Sultan's harem.
ZANZA of PERSIA:	A fabric merchant.
YAKAMU of KHARTA:	A fabric merchant.
PUTAN of UR:	A fabric merchant.
GENGHA of KASHMIR:	A fabric merchant.
ZENGA of KASHMIR:	A fabric merchant.
TARWID of KICHENJUNGA:	A fabric merchant.

Scene Breakdown

ACT I

Scene 1 – An Open Air Tavern in the Streets of Casamoro

Scene 2 – In front of curtain

Scene 3 – The Emperor's Eastern Palace

Scene 4 – In front of curtain

Scene 5 – The Bazaar

ACT II

Scene 1 – The Sultan's Fortress

Scene 2 – In front of curtain

Scene 3 – The Emperor's Eastern Palace

Scene 4 – In front of curtain

Scene 5 – An Open Air Tavern in the Streets of Casamoro

Scene 6 – In front of curtain

Scene 7 – The Emperor's Eastern Palace

Approximate Length

75 minutes

Time

Medieval times

Place

A Western Kingdom, Near the Arabian Empire

Scene 3

Setting: Interior of the Eastern Palace.

At Rise: Enter the PRINCESSES all talking at once.

(Complete chaos. They are looking around, taking it all in, recovering from a journey. Excitement and fatigue. Each is talking in her distinct character. CONSTANZA, the eldest, is wise and virtuous. CANDIDA is rebellious and restless. CATALINA is a complainer — and still seasick. CARLOTTA is adventurous and full of awe. CARMINA is always hungry. CAROLINA is interested in clothes and glitter. CASSANDRA, the youngest, is sweet and innocent. After a minute or two, we finally hear their individual lines.)

CARLOTTA

We crossed the entire Mediterranean Sea!

CATALINA

(Holding her stomach, not looking so good)

Every single wave of it.

CARLOTTA

And then we crossed the entire desert!

CAROLINA

Which desert did we cross?

CARLOTTA

The...something...Desert. I'm sure it has a name.

CATALINA

Of course it has a name!

CAROLINA

Anybody know the name of the desert we just crossed?

(Pause. Silence.)

CARMINA

Do people eat here?

CARLOTTA

Of course they eat!

CARMINA

Then why haven't *we* eaten?

CATALINA

How can you talk about eating?

CAROLINA

Because that's all Carmina ever talks about.

CATALINA

But how can you even *think* about eating?

CARMINA

It's all I can think about right now. I was ready to eat one of those camels.

CAROLINA

So was I, Carmina. Until it started spitting.

CARMINA

Do you think they have eggs in the East?

CAROLINA

If they have birds, they have eggs.

CARMINA

Well, do they have birds?

CARLOTTA

I think it's exotic here.

CASSANDRA

Carlotta, what does that word mean? Exotic.

CARLOTTA

I don't know. But it's an exotic-sounding word. Constanza, what does "exotic" mean?

CONSTANZA

Well, I can give you examples of exotic. Peacocks are exotic.

CAROLINA

I want a peacock. Do they have peacocks here?

CARLOTTA

Of course they do.

CARMINA

Then they probably have peacock eggs

CATALINA

Would you eat a peacock egg, Carmina?

CARMINA

Yes, I would!

CAROLINA

I want a peacock.

CATALINA

This is what a peacock sounds like.

(Imitates a peacock — awful sound)

Is that what you want?

CASSANDRA

I hope that's not what exotic is supposed to sound like.

CARLOTTA

Their feathers are exotic.

CASSANDRA

I still don't know what exotic means.

CANDIDA

Sultans are exotic.

CAROLINA

Do you think we'll see the Sultan?

CONSTANZA

Not if he knows what's good for him. He'd never cross the border into our empire.

CANDIDA

Maybe we should cross the border into *his* empire. That would be exotic.

CATALINA

That would be stupid. Do you know what stupid means?

CARMINA

Why did we have to travel all the way across the Empire?

CANDIDA

You know why, Carmina.

CARLOTTA

I think it's exciting to see new places.

CANDIDA

New places, Carlotta? It's just another *palace*. I want to see the *place*, not the *palace*.

CARLOTTA

We will! We will!

CONSTANZA

The camels were interesting.

CAROLINA

Until they started spitting.

CARMINA

I've never seen so much sand. It was like a giant beach with no ocean.

CATALINA

But we saw plenty of ocean before that.

CARLOTTA

That was not the ocean, Catalina. That was the Mediterranean Sea.

CATALINA

Thank you, Carlotta. I feel so much better for knowing.

CASSANDRA

We shouldn't be so far east. It's not safe.

CARLOTTA

What's wrong, Cassandra?

CASSANDRA

It's too close to the sunrise.

CAROLINA

That's not possible, Cassandra.

CASSANDRA

It's too close to the edge of the empire.

CARMINA

You didn't say that when we were at the *other* edge of the empire.

CASSANDRA

I want to go home.

CARLOTTA

We are home. The entire empire is our home. No matter where we are in it.

CASSANDRA

It's too big. It's not cozy. Like a home. I just want a nice room.

CARLOTTA

Room? You have all the room you could ask for!

CASSANDRA

What I'm asking for is a small room. Why does Daddy need such a big empire?

CAROLINA

Because there is more fabric in a big empire than there is in a small empire.

CANDIDA

More fabric means more clothes.

CASSANDRA

Why does he want so many clothes? He has only one body. He can only wear one outfit.

CANDIDA

One at a *time*, that is.

CASSANDRA

You can only live in one room at a time. One room is all you need.

CONSTANZA

He has many daughters. And he loves them all. Why can't he have many clothes and love them all?

CANDIDA

He loves his clothes more than his daughters.

CONSTANZA

Candida! Shame on you for saying that.

CANDIDA

Shame on him.

CONSTANZA

Candida!

CASSANDRA

Constanza, what is shame?

CONSTANZA

You don't know what shame is, Cassandra?

CASSANDRA

I know that it's something you don't talk about.

CONSTANZA

Very good.

CATALINA

So is shame private or public?

CAROLINA

Camels have no shame.

CONSTANZA

That's right. Shame is human. Only humans can have shame.

CARLOTTA

Is shame something you can share?

CARMINA

What else can you do with shame?

CONSTANZA

You don't want to do anything with it except get rid of it. Shame is ugly.

CANDIDA

So shame is ugly. Then what is beautiful is not shameful? Gold, palaces, peacock feathers, jewelry are all beautiful even when worn by shameful human beings.

CAROLINA

Clothes are beautiful.

CASSANDRA

Some clothes are not beautiful. Only beautiful clothes are beautiful.

CANDIDA

And who decides what is beautiful?

CONSTANZA

We know beauty when we see it. It's not a decision. It's plain as day.

CANDIDA

So beauty is plain.

CONSTANZA

We were not talking about beauty; we were talking about shame. And even if shame is ugly, beauty is not necessarily the opposite of shame.

CARMINA

What *is* the opposite of shame?

CONSTANZA

Dignity.

CATALINA

Is dignity public or private?

CONSTANZA

Dignity is a public thing that you keep to yourself. Shame is a private thing that everyone gets to see.

(Enter QUEEN CAMILLA)

CAMILLA

Hello girls!

(They all run to her, saying “Mother!” and all start talking at once as at the beginning of the scene. CAMILLA tries to keep track of it and answer each one, but it is chaos again. Then, a trumpet fanfare, and they all stop. Enter HERALD.)

HERALD

(Announcing)

His Royal Majesty, Emperor Charles Phillip Aloysius Gustavus Emmanuel Principato Stephanus Germanicus Fernando Charles Charles Charles!

(Another trumpet fanfare and EMPEROR makes his grand entrance. Exit HERALD.)

CAMILLA

Charles, really! Must you do this every time you enter a room?

EMPEROR

(Pauses)

Yes.

CAMILLA

But we're your family.

EMPEROR

I'm still the Emperor.

CAMILLA

But Charles, really!

EMPEROR

Let's not argue in front of the children, Camilla. You know I don't like that.

CAMILLA

That's because I win the arguments, Charles.

EMPEROR

Then let's not argue at all, Camilla. It's not becoming for you to win an argument with the Emperor.

CAMILLA

It *is* becoming, Charles. It is becoming a habit.

EMPEROR

(Waving her off and changing the subject)

And here are my lovely daughters. How do you like the Eastern Palace, my dears?

(They all talk at once)

EMPEROR

Very good.

(They stop talking)

Now you had better get some rest. Or at least, I had better get some rest. Tomorrow I have to meet with many eastern cloth merchants so that I can select a fabric for a new outfit, and of course there will be a pageant for the local population...

CAMILLA

Charles, really! Did you have to take us all the way to the eastern edge of the empire...

EMPEROR

Camilla, I never said that you all had to come with me.

CAMILLA

Well, of course we all had to come with you. The girls need to get out once in a while. And what's the point of having an empire if we don't get to see it?

EMPEROR

My thoughts exactly.

CAMILLA

But to come all this way just to get a new outfit.

EMPEROR

(Holds up his index finger to silence her)

Camilla. Don't forget the rule. You are queen of all — except in matters concerning my attire.

CAMILLA

(Sighs)

Yes, Charles.

EMPEROR

Please don't make me remind you again.

CAMILLA

Yes, Charles.

EMPEROR

Not that I don't value your advice about clothes.

CAMILLA

But you don't value my advice about clothes.

EMPEROR

Well, you've never given me any reason to value your opinion about my clothes.

CAMILLA

But Charles, really! Sometimes I think your clothes are, well...

EMPEROR

The rule, Camilla, it sounds like you are about to forget the rule.

CAMILLA

(Another sigh)

Yes, Charles.

EMPEROR

Besides, why be an Emperor if you don't look the part?

CANDIDA

Daddy, your problem is that you care more about your clothes than about anything else.

EMPEROR

Nonsense. Where do you get such ideas? No one has ever said anything like that to me before.

CANDIDA

Daddy, your other problem is that you only surround yourself with people who agree with you.

EMPEROR

You mean there are other kinds of people?

CAMILLA

Charles, really!

EMPEROR

And where is Donna Flora, the Imperial Tailor? Why isn't she here?

(Enter DONNA FLORA)

DONNA FLORA

(Breathless)

Here I am, Your Majesty.

EMPEROR

Do you have any fabrics to show me yet?

DONNA FLORA

Your Majesty, we only just arrived.

EMPEROR

But surely you arranged to have some fabrics waiting to greet me.

DONNA FLORA

Well, yes, I did.

EMPEROR

Of course, you did. Let's see them.

DONNA FLORA

Yes, Your Majesty. I'll be right back.

(Exit DONNA FLORA)

CAMILLA

Charles, really!

EMPEROR

Don't worry, Camilla. She said she'd be right back. You won't have to wait long at all.

CAMILLA

That's not what I meant.

EMPEROR

Well, then you should have said what you meant.

CAMILLA

What I meant was...

EMPEROR

Never mind, here she is.

(Enter DONNA FLORA with a huge armful of fabric. The PRINCESSES swarm around her and start taking pieces of cloth from her. Exit DONNA FLORA, once all the fabric has been taken from her.)

CARMINA

Look at what a lovely skirt this would make!

EMPEROR

It's not quite right for you, Carmina. But it might make just the right waistcoat for me, don't you think?

CAROLINA

This would be such a beautiful dress!

EMPEROR

The fabric is fine enough, Carolina. It would serve better, however, as a masculine accent. Perhaps an ascot, bunched up just under my chin.

CAROLINA

All that material wasted on an ascot?!

EMPEROR

Wasted? Nothing I wear is wasted. On the contrary. That is when it serves its highest purpose.

CATALINA

This would be perfect for a shawl.

EMPEROR

No, Catalina. A shawl must be lighter and more graceful.

CATALINA

You mean flimsy?

EMPEROR

I mean this would be a good cape for me. If I could find just the right coat and breeches to go with it.

CARLOTTA

Look how nice this looks on me.

EMPEROR

It looks very nice on you, Carlotta. But don't you agree it looks better on me?

CARLOTTA

Daddy! Why do you need so many clothes?

EMPEROR

It's not that I need *so many* clothes. I just need *the right* clothes. I'd be very happy with very few clothes. If they were the right clothes.

CANDIDA

Daddy, sometimes I think you are too vain.

EMPEROR

What did you say?

CANDIDA

Vain.

EMPEROR

Vein, as in the blood vessel, right? I suppose that makes sense, though it is a strange choice of words. Vein, as in full-blooded! An Emperor who bleeds for his people. Whose passion for his people knows no bounds. Which is why they love me so much.

CANDIDA

Oh, Daddy...

EMPEROR

Yes! I know. I am lovable. But do you really want to know why they love me? It is because I go through such trouble for them. I take the time and the effort to put on a good show. Other emperors don't even bother showing themselves to their people. But me, well, everywhere I go, they insist on seeing me. Who am I to disappoint them?

CAMILLA

So what are the girls and I supposed to do while you're picking out fabric?

EMPEROR

I'm sure you'll find something to do.

CAROLINA

Can we go to the Bazaar, Daddy?

EMPEROR

The Bazaar! Excellent idea, Carolina. Camilla! Take the girls to the Bazaar.

CAMILLA

Are you sure it's safe?

EMPEROR

Of course! What could possibly happen? Besides, you'll have the Imperial Guard with you.

CAMILLA

We'd better ask Tyrone if it's safe.

EMPEROR

Tyrone!

(Enter TYRONE)

TYRONE

Yes, Your Majesty?

EMPEROR

The Queen and the Princesses want to go to the Bazaar.

TYRONE

(Takes a breath)

Very well, Your Majesty.

CAMILLA

Tyrone, are you sure it's safe?

TYRONE

The Bazaar is right on the border. In fact, it is technically between the borders of the Western and the Eastern Empires. That is why all the trading is done there.

EMPEROR

Sounds like a lively spot.

CAMILLA

But is it safe, Tyrone?

TYRONE

(To EMPEROR)

Your Majesty. You should be aware that you have enemies here.

EMPEROR

Enemies?

TYRONE

Anyone loyal to the Sultan is not loyal to the Emperor.

EMPEROR

No one, not even the Sultan, would ever risk a war with the empire.

TYRONE

Your Majesty, the Sultan also has an empire.

EMPEROR

A desert full of camels is not much of an empire. Besides, have you seen the way those people dress? The camels dress better. In fact, I understand that camel hair makes a very interesting coat. At any rate, Tyrone, take the women to the Bazaar. I have very important business to attend to here at the palace. I don't need a lot of cackling hens cackling. Enjoy the Bazaar, my dears!

(PRINCESSES squeal with delight. "We're going to the Bazaar!" Again, they start talking all at once. Chaos.)

EMPEROR

Enough! Go!

(Exit PRINCESSES, CAMILLA, and TYRONE)

Donna Flora!

(Enter DONNA FLORA)

DONNA FLORA

Yes, Your Majesty?

EMPEROR

Now then, you will arrange to have the finest fabric merchants come here to present their finest fabrics?

DONNA FLORA

I am arranging it right now, Your Majesty.

EMPEROR

No, you're not. You're standing here talking to me.

DONNA FLORA

Yes, Your Majesty.

EMPEROR

It is invigorating, isn't it, Donna Flora? To come to a new place where there are new possibilities?

DONNA FLORA

Yes, Your Majesty.

EMPEROR

Maybe we will finally find the right outfit.

DONNA FLORA

The right outfit, Your Majesty?

EMPEROR

Yes, Donna Flora, the right outfit. The one that will finally reveal the real me.

BLACKOUT