

Catholic zealots leap from audience to break up performance of blasphemous play

By Juliane von Reppert-Bismarck

Monday, 3 May 2004

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Shouting "Viva Cristo Rey," two men launched themselves from the audience at the Circulo de Bellas Artes and beat up the actor and [playwright](#) of *Me cago en Dios*, directed by Pedro Forero, which for the past week had been making headlines in Spain for its blasphemous title and anti-clerical content.

"They beat us, they destroyed the music equipment, and they tried to set fire to the set, which is made of loo paper," said the playwright, Iñigo Ramírez de Haro. "The audience thought it was [part of the play](#) so no one helped us for ages."

Ramírez de Haro and the actor Fernando Incera were treated for sprains and bruises. Police arrested the two young men, one of whom is said to serve with the armed forces. Their shouts translated as "Long live Christ the King", but are also a rallying call to the conservative Catholic Cristo Rey movement.

Controversy about the humorous monologue has raged since it opened 10 days ago. Set in a bathroom, it features a constipated man who muses about violence and abuses suffered at the hands of clerics during a childhood at a Jesuit school.

The title translates as "I shit on God," an expression Spaniards utter commonly in anger or amazement. But when the playwright wrote the largely autobiographical work for a political theatre festival in New York last summer, he gave it the English title *In God we shit*.

Madrid's archbishop has demanded the play be banned. The president of Madrid's regional government - Esperanza Aguirre, the playwright's sister-in-law - last week wrote to the arts centre, urging its director to rethink its programme. Many view the letter as a veiled threat to withdraw funding from the centre.

Madriñeos say local conservative politicians are reinforcing the power of the Catholic church and depleting the capital of its artistic diversity.

"Sell me a ticket. I don't care if I have to stand," one leather-clad *Madriñeo* told centre employees hours before the play's final showing yesterday. "I don't care about the play. I'm here to support artists against the religious freaks who rule this city."

The play will open in Paris in August. Other performances are planned in Italy and Argentina.

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