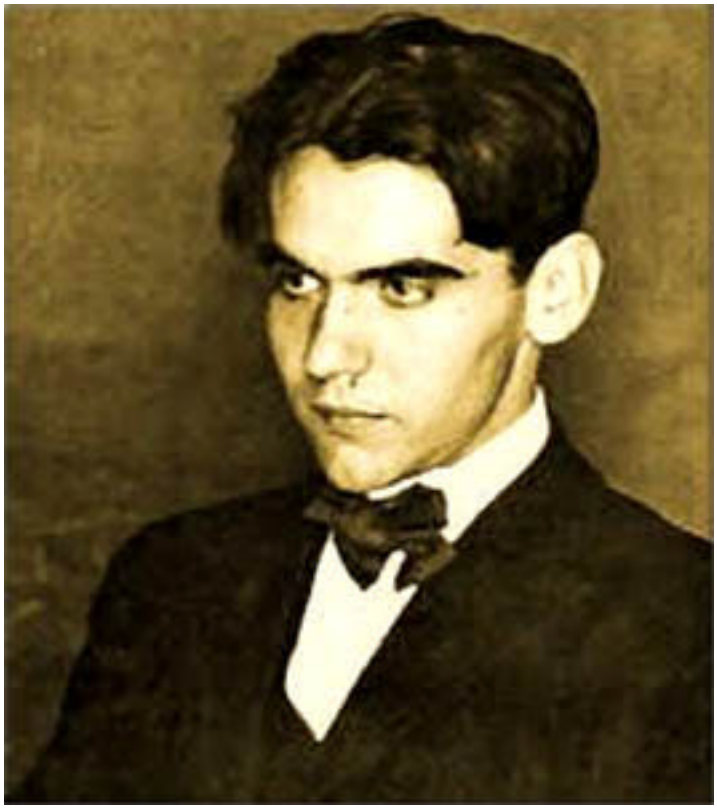
FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA



Study Guide by David Richard Jones and Susan Jones

CONTENTS

Teaching Lorca

Teachers able to expose their students to productions of plays after studying them in the classroom can show their students what happens when dramatic literature-characters, actions, language, and imagery-move from the page to the stage. Other articles on this website, especially René Buch's interview about directing Lorca, will be particularly helpful in this study.

These questions may help in organizing discussions and assignments about the play on stage.

Characters. Before seeing the production, describe one or more important characters from the play. Consider their social position, family, education, and emotional history. How do they look and talk and move in your imagination? Your impressions will come not only from what they say and do, but from how other characters talk about them and react to them-even from your own history. These characters may remind you of real or fictional people you have known.

After you have seen the play, describe your reactions to the same characters on the stage. How closely did they match your expectations or differ from them? What surprised you?

Scenes. Try a similar experiment with particular scenes (e.g. the lullaby sequence in Blood Wedding or the laundress scene in Yerma), by examining the characters' interactions and then comparing your study with how the scene is staged and acted at Repertorio Español.

Language. What is the difference between reading Lorca's lines and seeing them acted? Take one or more of the play's best speeches and analyze them in detail. Consider why each is important in the play, what makes particular words or images especially effective and memorable. Imagine different ways in which the lines might be spoken, the range of expression available by varying volume, speed, pitch, and pauses. What gestures or physical attitudes or facial expressions do you imagine the actor might use for these lines?

Listen for these passages in production and notice how they were spoken, which ones seemed especially important to the characters or to you, and which speeches seemed more significant in the production than they had seemed when you read the play.

Songs. Pay particular attention to the songs in Lorca's text. What does each contribute to the play's action or characters? How does each introduce or reinforce a mood, a theme, or a plot development? And how is each staged?

Themes. The three García Lorca tragedies have thematic similarities. Based on your reading and your theatrical experience, what do you think he tells us about the social roles or positions of men and women, about violence, about women as tragic heroes, about the conflict between voices of conformity and voices of rebellion, or about the conflict between reason and passion?

Symbols. What is the first manmade object which a character in the play mentions? How does that object connect with later events or with the ultimate tragedy? Find all the places in the text where animals are mentioned and consider their associations with characters or conflicts.

The Life of Federico Garcia Lorca

Youth

Federico García Lorca was born in Fuente Vaqueros, a small farming town outside Granada, the urban center of Andalucía. He grew up with a great love of the region with its "melodic poplars and lyrical rivers." He wrote to a friend: "If you could see how Andalucía really is! Just to walk one has to burrow corridors in the golden light like the moles in their dark element. The brilliant silks Michelangelize the behinds of opulent women. The roosters stick deluxe banderillas in the nape of dawn and I'm turning dark from the sun and the full moon."

As for the city of Granada, famous for its Moorish architecture, distinctive light, and beautiful gardens, Lorca later said that Granada "formed me and made me what I am: a poet from birth and unable to help it." He could effuse over the city, remembering it "as one must remember bygone sweethearts and as one recalls a sunlit day of childhood." But Lorca's critical temperament, always as strong as his lyrical gift, led him to describe the expulsion of the Moors from Granada in 1492 as "a disastrous event, even though they say the opposite in the schools," because "an admirable civilization, and a poetry, architecture and delicacy unique in the world--all were lost, to give way to an impoverished cowed town, a wasteland populated by the worst bourgeoisie in Spain today."

The date of Lorca's birth was 1898, the year in which Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin built his first airship, Marie and Pierre Curie discovered radium, Konstantin Stanislavsky inaugurated the Moscow Art Theatre, Emile Zola published his famous "J'accuse" at the height of the Dreyfus affair, and the US went to war with Spain over Cuba. In the same year were born Ernest Hemingway, who would romanticize Spain and strip down the prose of American fiction to a kind of modernist poetry, and Bertolt Brecht, who would combine social criticism and poetic language with results that were as revolutionary for German drama as Lorca's for Spanish.

The Spanish poet was fortunate in his parents. Don Federico García Rodríguez, his father, was an energetic and prosperous farmer who gave Federico his passion. The mother, Doña Vicenta Lorca, was a woman of intelligence, education, and imagination, a former school teacher who nurtured his musical and poetic interests. His correct surname, of course, was and is "García Lorca," but from an early age, the poet called himself "Lorca," and others followed his example.

Due to an undiagnosed fever during his infancy, Federico was slow to develop in his early years. He did not talk until age three or walk until age four, and for years afterward he retained a slight limp. From his earliest years, his interests were artistic. He learned

popular songs. He read romantic and classical literature. He studied piano and guitar, eventually becoming very proficient at both. To the delight of the family and its servants, he "acted" the part of the local priest, imitating his fiery sermons. And he was thrilled when he saw a troupe of traveling gypsies with their marionette theatre and puppet farces. Soon, like so many future dramatists in that pre-cinematic, pre-televistic age, Lorca was spending hours building toy theatres, making costumes and sets, and devising plays for his own and his family's consumption.

The Student

When he was eleven, Lorca's family moved to Granada where he attended a Jesuit school. Federico proved to be an indifferent student. At sixteen, he failed the examination for his baccalaureate at Granada's General and Technical Institute. Retaking the exam a year later, he passed and went on to the University of Granada to study law. But again he proved a middling student and failed several courses. He had also enrolled in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, and here he followed his true interests: writing poetry, painting, playing the piano, and reading-the nineteenth century Spanish Romantics, the modern writers of Latin America and Spain, the French Symbolist poets, Shakespeare, and classic dramas of Spain and Greece. He soon quit the university and moved to Madrid. (Later, in 1923, for no reason that his friends understood, he would return to Granada to finish his law degree.)

Lorca's university career, however brief, left him with several important legacies, including a mentor, Fernando de los Ríos, and material for a book. De los Ríos was a law professor in Granada who befriended Lorca when he perceived the young man's true gifts. Later the Minister of Public Education under the Republic and ambassador to Washington during the Civil War, de los Ríos would also be the father-in-law of the poet's brother, Federico García Lorca, and the man responsible for Federico's famous visit to New York City.

Lorca's first book was based on four trips he took through central Spain during 1916-17 with a class studying "Theory and Literature of the Arts." After collecting his impressions from these journeys, Lorca asked his father for financial assistance in publishing them. The elder García turned to de los Ríos and the composer Manuel de Falla to ascertain whether his son's writing was of legitimate quality. Assured that it was, he produced the money to float Impressions and Landscapes (Impresiones y paisajes, 1918), a slim volume full of purple passages and authentically lyrical evocations of Castile, León, and Galicia. At twenty, Lorca was launched.

The Young Writer

Moving to Madrid in 1919, Lorca made his new home in the Residencia de Estudiantes, which a friend called "a Spanish interpretation of English college life." Here he joined a generation of artists who would revolutionize Spanish culture. The painter Salvador Dalí lived there. So did filmmaker Luis Buñuel. So too did many of the young poets who would become members of the "Generation of '27." With the exception of summer vacations spent in Granada, García Lorca would stay in the Residencia until 1928, by which time he had become Spain's most highly respected younger poet.

His first major work after moving to Madrid was an overtly symbolist parable about a lowly cockroach bewitched by a glamorous butterfly, originally entitled The Slightest of Plays (La menor de las comedias). In 1920, a year after its composition, the playwright Gregorio Martínez Sierra convinced him to change the title to The Butterfly's Evil Spell (El maleficio de la mariposa) and then staged the play in Madrid. The first and only night of this production was a disaster, with the audience laughing at the talking insects and Lorca haughtily saying, "To me this audience means nothing, nothing, nothing."

Although he buried this early failure for many years, Lorca kept on writing plays. In 1923 he created Mariana Pineda, a poetic romance about a Betsy Ross-like national heroine who had been immortalized in a Spanish nursery rhyme. Like so many of Lorca's later heroines, Mariana ends tragically, for she not only sews the banner for the liberals who are rebelling against the monarchy, but is abandoned by her lover, the rebel leader, when she is arrested and eventually executed as a martyr to their cause. In the same year, on the Feast of the Epiphany (Twelfth Night), Lorca produced a triple bill of puppet plays, including at least one of his own works, for his family at their home in Andalucía. Then, in 1926, he wrote an Andalusian folk farce about a vivacious woman suspected of infidelity, The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife (La zapatera prodigiosa).

In 1927, the great actress Margarita Xirgu produced Mariana Pineda, with designs by Salvador Dalí, and it was well received in Barcelona and Madrid. Lorca was not yet a terribly serious playwright, but now he tasted the honey of theatrical success. Perhaps the most important result of this occasion was his alliance with Xirgu, already a famous actress and later, after fleeing Franco's regime, Lorca's apostle throughout Latin America.

Success

All through the 1920s, however, Lorca's success was greatest as a poet. His first published volume of verse, the simply titled Book of Poems (Libro de poemas), appeared in 1921. A year later he joined Manuel de Falla in organizing a festival in Granada of cante jondo ("deep song"), a dramatic Andalusian folk music based on ancient and non-Spanish sources and preferred by some critics over the more popular flamenco. Lorca simultaneously began writing and reading his own poems in this style, although he did not publish them until a decade later.

The poet's fame crested in 1927, when he published his Canciones at the same time as the success of Mariana Pineda and an exhibition of his paintings in Barcelona. Also in that year he participated in an epoch-making poetry conference in Seville organized by the literary bullfighter Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, whose death would inspire Lorca's famous Lament in 1933. Here the "Generation of '27" came together to celebrate a new poetics. When Lorca read the poems that would be published a year later as Gypsy Ballads (Romancero gitano), the spectators waved their handkerchiefs, threw their hats and even their suit jackets into the air. One young poet, carried away by the moment, went so far as to climb on a chair and throw away his tie and collar.

With Gypsy Ballads, a legend of Lorca as a "gypsy poet" began to proliferate. He had deliberately written in the voice of "un gitano legítimo" ("a proper gypsy") and eulogized Granada as their city ("¡Oh ciudad de los gitanos!" is the repeated cry in "Ballad of the

Spanish Civil Guard"). But he was appalled to be taken as "an uncultured, uneducated primitive poet." Gypsies, he protested, "are a theme. Nothing more. I would be the same poet if I wrote about sewing needles or hydraulic landscapes."

With the success of this book, Federico García Lorca seemed to reach the end of a phase in his life. In 1928, his friendship and collaboration with Dalí came to an end when the painter moved to Paris and criticized the Gypsy Ballads. In collaboration with Falla and others in Granada, Lorca founded an insurgent literary magazine entitled Rooster Gallo), which only crowed for two issues before expiring.

At this same time, Lorca wrote several more plays, including The Love of Don Perlimplín and Belisa in the Garden, a symbolic farce about an old man and his young wife which was censored, either because of its subtitle ("an Erotic Alleluia") or because its title character too closely resembled Spain's ruler, Miguel Primo de Rivera, who was then about to marry.

The Poet in New York

So, in the period of his greatest fame, Lorca drifted into a depressive, disillusioned state of mind. He described himself to a friend as suffering "one of the saddest and most unpleasant moments of my life." He abandoned the gypsy ballad poetry that was making him famous. He even stopped reading his poetry to friends. He was rescued from this melancholy mood by his mentor, Fernando de los Ríos, who took him from Madrid through France and England to New York City.

Even before leaving Spain, Lorca wrote to a friend that "New York seems horrible, but for that very reason I'm going there." Once he had settled in, he found the city "Babylonic, cruel, and violent" but also "filled with a great modern beauty." For convenience more than for education, he enrolled at Columbia University and settled in at a dormitory in John Jay Hall. Despite his exposure to the university, he learned little English and made few friends. He did give a few lectures and attend a few others. He went to college football games. He met the poet Hart Crane. He walked the Brooklyn Bridge and roamed Harlem at night, succumbing entirely to the romance of the New York streets.

Lorca's American sojourn, which lasted most of a year and ended with a lecture-tour of Cuba, had a galvanic effect on his writing. Even before leaving Spain, he had told one friend that "My poetry is now beginning to take off in an even more personal direction." To another colleague he predicted that his new work would be "a sort of VEIN-OPENING POETRY," reflecting "all of my love of things and my mockery of things." Manhattan brought forth just such poems, published in 1930 as The Poet in New York. The line and form of Lorca's poetry loosened up to imitate the American epic metrics of Walt Whitman. At the same time he wrote a film script, Trip to the Moon (Viaje a la luna) and parts of two plays belonging to what Lorca called his "impossible theatre:" The Public (El público), which merged theatrical concerns with a homosexual theme, and As Five Years Pass (Así que pasen cinco años), a surrealist three-act piece composed of the discontinuous subconscious thoughts of a young man in the last minutes of his life.

The Man of the Theatre

Returning to Spain in the summer of 1930, Lorca encountered a country at the beginning of cataclysmic change. Primo de Rivera's dictatorship ended. A year later, King Alfonso XIII abdicated, and Spain became a republic. When Lorca's great friend Fernando de los Ríos became a functionary in (and later head of) the new republic's Ministry of Culture and Public Information, governmental support for theatre increased dramatically. The government instituted a new Teatro del Pueblo directed by Alejandro Casona and a traveling theatre codirected by Lorca and Eduardo Ugarte. The name of the latter, La Barraca ("The Hut"), evoked the small thatched houses set in Valencia's market gardens, but Lorca saw this barraca as "unusually versatile, taking to wheels and traveling about the countryside" to universities and small towns.

Beginning in 1932, La Barraca toured Spain performing Lorca's adaptations of Golden Age dramas with ballad accompaniment. The theatre's actors were unpaid amateurs. Its machinery and settings were designed and made by student architects. Its executive committee included students of philosophy. But it was nevertheless, in Lorca's words, "Spain's newest gesture toward establishing the arts as an active force in the life of the Republic." Lasting until 1936 (even though it lost half its subsidy in 1934), the traveling troupe brought a total of thirteen productions to 74 villages and towns.

Just as important as La Barraca's outreach to the Spanish populace was its impact on Lorca the dramatist. He felt there "the joy of creating, of doing things," but he also admitted that "my work on La Barraca is a great education." From the beginning he was involved in all details of its operation, from adapting scripts to technical work to acting a small role for a short time. He traveled with the group on its tours, studied its audiences, and adjusted his texts and productions accordingly. "I've learned so much," he said. "Now I really feel like a director."

In the workshop of La Barraca was hatched the immense skill of Lorca's late works which would change the Spanish-language theatre. During 1933, he took only a week to write Blood Wedding (Bodas de sangre) from a 1928 newspaper story about faithless love and remorseless death. First produced in Madrid by the company of Josefina Díaz de Artigas and directed by the author, this play was an immediate smash success. It was the first work to give Lorca a substantial income and international renown, for within a few years, the Spanish version had traveled to Argentina and Mexico and translations had been produced in New York, Paris, and Moscow. (A 1935 bilingual version mounted by New York's Neighborhood Playhouse, entitled Bitter Oleander, did poorly with critics and the public, some of whom laughed at the extravagant staging and the poetry, especially the sound of a mother calling her son "my carnation.")

The success of Blood Wedding led to a rush of writing and production. Still in 1933, Don Perlimplín appeared with a short early version of The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife at a Madrid theatre club, and Xirgu produced and portrayed Yerma, another major success which ran for over 100 performances in Madrid and was remounted in Barcelona in 1935. Also in 1933, Lorca spent five months in South America, mainly in Buenos Aires, where he saw productions of Blood Wedding, Mariana Pineda, the premiere of the

expanded Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife, plus a version of his adaptation of Lope's The Foolish Lady (La dama boba) staged before a huge audience. In 1935, Lorca wrote and premiered The Puppet Play of Don Cristobal (El retablillo de don Cristóbal) and Doña Rosita the Spinster (Doña Rosita la soltera), the latter produced by Xirgu in Barcelona to good reviews and decent business (42 performances). In the last year of his life, 1936, in addition to a second version of The Public, Lorca completed The House of Bernarda Alba (La casa de Bernarda Alba), which would not be premiered until 1945 when Xirgu produced it in Buenos Aires. He also completed another major work, The Destruction of Sodom (La destrucción de Sodoma), intended as part of a biblical trilogy, and a volume of homosexual love poems, the Sonnets of Dark Love (Sonetos del amor oscuro), which was suppressed by his family until the 1980s.

The Martyr

In July 1936, ignoring his friends' warnings and turning aside travel offers to Colombia and Mexico, Lorca left Madrid to spend the summer in Granada. A political crisis was already engulfing the Second Republic. Two days after the poet traveled to Andalucía, the Spanish Civil War broke out, occasioned by the revolt in Spanish Morocco of an army garrison under General Francisco Franco. Within two days, the Granada garrison followed suit, the first army installation on the Iberian mainland to join the coup. Two weeks later, Lorca's brother-in-law, the mayor of Granada, was arrested by the Fascists. After a fortnight in custody, he was executed. The same day, August 16, Lorca himself was arrested. He had already been threatened by armed thugs at the family farm and gone into hiding in Granada with a friend whose family was influential in the Falange. Lorca was confined for several days, then taken out with another man, a one-legged schoolteacher from a nearby village, and shot. They were buried in an unmarked grave in a grove of olive trees.

Why was García Lorca executed? No one is completely certain. However, his family was known locally as sympathizers and supporters of the leftist Popular Front and as friends with the liberal Fernando de los Ríos. The poet himself was decidedly antifascist, with a viewpoint that was drifting leftward and writings that showed an increasing focus on social issues. He commonly answered questions about his political affiliation by saying, "I am on the side of the poor." But Lorca had a true artist's hatred of politics and parties. "I will never be political," he said only a month before his death. "I am a revolutionary because there are no true poets that are not revolutionaries. Don't you agree? But political, I will never, never be!" The Fascists, on the other hand, were truly political. They were embarked on a wave of sectarian violence, a social purge, that would kill some 4500 citizens of Granada alone in the next four years.

"I want to sleep awhile, / awhile, a minute, a century," Lorca wrote in "Gacela of Dark Death" soon before his actual death, "but all must know that I have not died."

What did not die or disappear was his voice -- "there is a stable of gold in my lips," he wrote in "Gacela of Dark Death" -- and a vision of a modern theatre for a modern Spain at the time when Spain itself retreated into a dark age.

The crime was in Granada.

They killed Federico as the first light came. The squad of executioners Dared not look him in the face. All of them closed their eyes. They prayed, but not even God saves you! Federico fell dead, Blood in the face and lead in the bowels Know then, that the crime was in Granada Poor Granada-in his Granada.

-Antonio Machado

20th Century Spanish Theater

Lorca's dramatic career is often presented to students as a sublime accident, as if his plays arose from no immediate theatrical past and-especially because his death coincided with the Spanish Civil War and Franco's triumph-led to no future. In reality, his plays stand in the midst of a complex theatrical landscape, surrounded by interesting predecessors, contemporaries, and followers.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the theatre of northern Europe was dominated by exciting new styles of dramaturgy-realistic, socially critical plays of modern life (e.g. Ibsen, Shaw, Chekhov) and experimental, symbolical plays about the inner world of souls, dreams, and the unconscious mind (e.g. Yeats, Strindberg, Maeterlinck). The Spanish stage, by comparison, was stagnant, partly because it had failed to embrace either romanticism or realism, the two great strains of nineteenth-century literature. For decades, Spanish theatre had been dominated by the plays of José Echegaray, with their complicated, sometimes unbelievable plots clothed in sonorous, sometimes bombastic language, and by pseudo-realistic plays of modern life where well-dressed people stood in upper-class settings lecturing each other in moralistic, sentimental verse.

By the 1890s, many dramatists were rebelling against the artificiality of the Spanish stage. Realist rebels included Enrique Gaspar, who defended prose as the medium of serious drama; the Catalán José Feliú y Codina, who employed regional, rural settings in La Dolores (1892); and Joaquín Dicenta, whose Juan José (1895) moved the traditional traits of Spanish drama-its theme of honor vs. love and its lofty tone-into a proletarian setting. A famous novelist, Benito Pérez Galdós, fused the liberal thought of realism and the psychological depth of symbolism in plays that were awkward but essentially modernist. The "Generation of '98," the source of modernist experiments in many fields, criticized the Spanish theatre as too internationalist, too commercial, and too concentrated in Madrid. Attacking the theatre for being divorced from popular life in his 1896 essay on "The Regeneration of the Spanish Theatre," Miguel de Unamuno wrote, "The theatre no longer lives on nor seeks sustenance from the guts of the people; it lives on itself."

The first distinctively modern voice of the Spanish theatre belongs to Jacinto Benavente, who lived long (1866-1954) and wrote prolifically (over 150 plays). After attacking bourgeois society in his earliest plays, Benavente moved to milder satires of middle-class boredom and snobbery in drawing-room comedies. In his own time, critics rejected Benavente because he lacked contact with the traditions of Spanish writing, and later critics typically dismiss his plays as facile and removed from real life. But Benavente was a skillful dramatist who could satirize a dominant class while still retaining its patronage. He

also wrote well, putting witty, brilliant dialogue into the mouths of his characters. Like Lorca, he frequently used women as rebellious figures in his social criticisms. In his most famous play, Bonds of Interest (Los intereses creados, 1907), he reached beyond the limitations of the modern bourgeoisie to the historical period of the Italian commedia dell'arte and achieved international success. He is most often compared to Bernard Shaw, but Benavente won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1922, three years before Shaw.

Benavente's example boosted the careers of other playwrights. Gregorio Martínez Sierra wrote a string of plays that made him famous in Spain and abroad. (During 1917-1924, he also directed Madrid's Teatro Eslava and gave García Lorca his first premiere.) The Alvarez Quintero brothers, Serafín and Joaquín, were as prolific as Benavente, writing roughly 200 short and long pieces. Their subject matter was their native Andalucía, which they presented in a style called "sentimental, charming, and thoroughly false" by one historian. Another writer of folk plays, Carlos Arniches, concentrated for some years on urban Madrileños and experimented with tragedia grotesca ("grotesque tragedy") using black humor to attack social evils. And verse drama remained popular during the 1910s and 1920s, from conventional plays of the teatro poético, such as Eduardo Marquina's The Daughters of the Cid (Las hijas del Cid, 1908), to dramas by important modernist writers such as Valle-Inclán, Lorca, and the Machado brothers, Antonio and Manuel.

Most of these playwrights pale by comparison with Lorca, but during the 1920s they raised Spanish drama to its first great international prominence. Consider, for example, New York theatre of this period. The prestigious Theatre Guild, producer of challenging plays by Shaw and O'Neill, opened in 1919 with Benavente's Bonds of Interest. Later in the 1920s, Eva Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre had a long-run hit with Martínez Sierra's sentimental nun-story, The Cradle Song. In 1929, the aging leading man, Otis Skinner, played the Quinteros' A Hundred Years Old on Broadway, and Ethel Barrymore opened the Broadway theatre that still bears her name with Martínez Sierra's The Kingdom of God, in which she aged from 19 to 70 over three acts. To New Yorkers, Spanish drama was especially interesting because it seemed to resemble the Irish folk-drama made popular by American tours of Dublin's Abbey Theatre.

As Lorca rose to fame during the 1920s and early 1930s, other writers contributed adventurous works to the Spanish theatre. José Martínez Ruiz, known as Azorín, wrote a group of plays between 1926 and 1930 which fused the styles of Pirandello, Maeterlinck, and Cocteau into an original Spanish idiom. Jacinto Grau's Mr. Pygmalion (El señor de Pigmalión) was pure Pirandello, for its story about the relation between an artist and his characters seemed an outright steal from Six Characters in Search of an Author, and Grau's play played successfully in Paris, Prague, and Rome before appearing in Madrid in 1928. A year later, Ramón Gómez de la Serna assaulted Madrid theatregoers with an avant-garde farce, The Semi-Beings (Los medios seres), in which the title characters were depicted as split down the middle vertically (one half blacked-out while the other half was visible). In 1931, Rafael Alberti achieved a major success with an allegorical auto, The Uninhabited Man (El hombre deshabitado) and caused a riot with a real-life political drama called Fermín Galán. Unamuno, who wrote a dozen philosophical plays over his long career, achieved some success in 1932 with a mysterious fable about the

uncertainties of identity, The Other (El otro). Alejandro Casona was another playwright who, like Lorca, headed a subsidized theatre under the Republic and during this period he used fantasy to transform reality in such plays as The Stranded Mermaid (La sirena varada) and Our Natasha (Nuestra Natacha).

Ramón María de Valle-Inclán presents the most interesting profile of modernist writers preceding Lorca. Valle-Inclán's theatrical career had begun with symbolism (Ashes, 1899) and "dream plays" evocative of Strindberg (Tragedia de ensueño, 1903 and Comedia de ensueño, 1905). By the 1920s, he was writing more modern works, including farces and his "esperpentos," so-called after the distortions of fun-house mirrors. And he was present on the Spanish stage, with three premieres during 1924, another in 1926, and a trio of productions in the early 1930s. In later years, his plays were either censored by the Franco regime or dismissed by literary critics as undramatic or untheatrical. But Valle-Inclán's drama can be intensely passionate, verbally brilliant, and theatrically imaginative, as shown in the early 1960s by important Spanish revivals of *Divine Words* (Divinas palabras) and *Bohemian Lights* (Luces de bohemia). In the past several decades, the resurgence of interest in Valle-Inclán has spread beyond Spain to Latin America and France. During the 1992 celebrations of Columbus's first voyage, a major Parisian theatre assembled an international cast of Spanish-speaking stars in an adaptation of his novel, Tirano Banderas, and toured the show across Latin America.

The story of Spanish theatre after Lorca is more complicated than its earlier history. Traditionally, critics and directors from other countries have dismissed later Spanish theatre as hopelessly compromised by state censorship. Franco's triumph certainly was cataclysmic, leading to the suppression of Lorca's plays and the flight from Spain of many of the experimental writers cited above. But Benavente returned to the Spanish stage in 1939 and, true to his prolific form, produced another 35 plays in the fifteen years before his death. The Alvarez Quintero brothers and the aging poetic dramatist, Eduardo Marquina, also continued their careers in Franco's Spain. In 1962, Alejandro Casona recanted his earlier support of the Republic and was welcomed back to a successful commercial career. And new dramatists arose, some of them working within the ideological strictures of the Falangist state, others becoming known as "underground" writers in the 1960s, still others (like Fernando Arrabal) writing in exile. Alfonso Sastre, author of Ana Kleiber (1955) and other strong plays, is an example of a vital, interesting writer who grew up in Franco's Spain, and like others-such as Buero Vallejo (Lope de Vega prize recipient, 1949)-proposed a socially active and critical theatre and battled the censorship throughout his career.

And, of course, Spanish theatre since Lorca has been transformed by his plays, no matter that they were suppressed by Franco's government. Throughout the Spanish-speaking world, the roles which the great actresses covet are still Lorca's amazing women. In addition, much of the best and most successful new theatrical work in Spanish is unabashedly, fearlessly poetic, a perfect continuation of Lorca's great legacy.

Federico Garcia Lorca – Women and the Drama of Sexual Liberation

Lorca's major plays -- *Blood Wedding, Yerma, and The House of Bernarda Alba*, as well as *Mariana Pineda, The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife*, and *Doña Rosita the Spinster* -- are among the most woman-centered plays in dramatic history.

In these plays, the pivotal characters are women. Women are the ones who suffer from desire and pass through conflict to tragic or comic resolution. Most of the scenes take place in women's spaces, the domestic interiors which they rule and from which men are estranged (or, as in *The House of Bernarda Alba*, completely prohibited).

The female characters reveal themselves most easily and deeply in conversations with other women. The poetry which erupts at moments of emotional intensity usually comes from the mouths of female characters. Especially in the three great tragedies which are known as his "trilogy of rural life," Lorca chooses women to exemplify the human life which is crushed by Spanish customs and social life.

In *Blood Wedding*, Lorca's story oscillates between the two magnetic poles of the Mother and the Bride. The Mother has internalized the mores and constrictions of her harsh, rural world. She is strict about money and marriage and contemptuous of feelings. She is deeply conservative about gender roles (men belong in the fields, women belong in the house), about the importance of procreation ("Your grandfather left a son on every corner"), and about relations between the sexes ("I looked at nobody-I looked at your father, and when they killed him I looked at the wall in front of me"). So there is no surprise when the Mother defines marriage for the Bride: "A man, some children, and a wall two yards thick for everything else."

Small wonder that the Bride rebels against this confining society, which stifles her voice as well as her sexuality. After the formal interview with her novio and his mother, she suddenly bites her hand and cries "Ay-y-y!" in inexpressible rage and desire. Clearly she desires Leonardo, but why? Does her need spring from love or lust or the frustration of a life with no choices and no control? In the moments surrounding the wedding, she shuns physical contact and struggles to deny her thwarted passion. Only after she has run away with Leonardo-while alone in the forest with her lover and then grieving with the bereaved Mother-can she unleash torrents of poetry, harsh and vivid images of her love and liberation and eventual tragedy.

A very similar pattern rules the all-feminine landscape of *The House of Bernarda Alba*. Bernarda is like the Mother in the sense that she embodies the harsh, restrictive social codes that repress women. Her law for the sexes is "Needle and thread for women. Whiplash and mules for men." She too is concerned with maintaining class distinctions, with amassing money, and with putting up "a good front" of "family harmony" no matter how miserable her daughters may be. And she is fiercely strong-as Poncia says, "perfectly capable of sitting on your heart and watching you die for a whole year without turning off that cold little smile." In opposition to her are her daughters with their silenced lusts. Are they "bad" as the servant says? "They're women without men, that's all," answers Poncia. "And in such matters even blood is forgotten." No one else could have slammed the door more irrevocably on her children, kept them more confined, than Bernarda herself.

Some contemporary feminists have difficulty sympathizing with the title character of Yerma since her rebellion and her tragedy come from an intense desire to bear children, which her husband Juan denies her. But Yerma's soul is bound and gagged by Juan, his sisters, her neighbors, and the social expectation that she be quiet and dutiful. Like the Mother and Bernarda, Juan is convinced that nature's way is "sheep in the fold and women at home." However, as Yerma responds, "men get other things out of life: their cattle, trees, conversations," whereas "women have only their children and the care of their children." She can imagine no other purpose for a woman's life, and for it she must depend only on her husband. Juan's indifference leads her to sweep aside her own sense of honor, to smash social conventions, and to turn herself into an outlaw.

What are contemporary readers to make of this male author and his female subjects? Is his use of these figures a true gesture of liberation or simply more sexism in a humanist disguise? Lorca had no interest in feminism per se and clearly did not portray his Spanish women with reference to a specific social or political program. Instead, like Ibsen, Chekhov, and Benavente before him, he used women as human beings and analyzed their problems as representative of broader human dilemmas. But at the same time, his heroines are distinctively modern women. Unlike Golden Age heroines, his women's difficulties are not primarily designed to push along a plot of intrigue or coquetry. They can be strident and forceful. The very heart of their drama is their struggle to gain control over their lives, and the fact that all but one of his leading women fail is a criticism of the society which makes tragedy out of such a struggle.

As a homosexual, Lorca had a special sympathy for oppressed, powerless groups and individuals, especially women. An English critic, Paul Binding, puts the case this way in his insightful book, *Lorca: The Gay Imagination* (1985): The homosexual writer, with singular qualification, can view women as autonomous beings; freed from the endowments of desire or acquisition, they can stand before him in all their complexity and their tragedy. Tragedy -- because he, more than his heterosexual fellows perhaps, can understand just what cost to their psychic life their enforced surrender to convention so frequently entails. Just as the gay man has had to put up with expectations from those around him that he has neither inclination nor ability to fulfill, so women, especially in traditional societies, have had to acquiesce to criteria of judgment -- founded on others' convenience -- which may find them wanting and which, in their inmost beings, they resent and despise.

Especially in the last decade, students of Lorca have come to understand Lorca's homosexuality in greater detail and depth. If he experienced tension about acknowledging his sexual nature, either to himself or to the world, he managed to keep that tension below the surface of his early poetry. But he wrote and then suppressed a number of poems about homosexuality in the 1920s. Several commentators have concluded that Lorca's crisis of soul during 1928, which sent him off to New York City, was in large part a crisis of sexuality. Part of its cure, as embodied in the Freudian, confessional odes of *The Poet in New York,* was a greater frankness about his emotional and sexual nature. At last in the 1930s, with his play *The Public* and the long-suppressed Sonnets of the *Dark Love*, Lorca experienced a creative "coming out" that astonished the friends to whom he read these late works.

But if we now have a fuller picture of Lorca's emotional nature, do we know how he came to make women so central to his work and to absorb their desires and natures? Are gay or lesbian artists different from heterosexuals with equally powerful visions? How do homosexual artists of either sex understand the other gender? Literary critics are only beginning to understand these and equally basic questions about our sexuality and creativity.

Current theorizing on these questions is in its infancy and may never yield us any useful generalizations. Human hearts and brains may work like precision instruments, but who can write the owner's manual for the human imagination?

Quotations from Federico Garcia Lorca

My earliest memories of childhood have a flavor of earth . . . shepherds, meadows, sky, solitude.

Being from Granada gives me a sympathetic understanding of those who are persecuted- of the gypsy, the negro, the Jew, of the Moor which all granadinos carry inside them.

I want and must have my privacy. If I fear stupid fame it is precisely for that reason. The famous man knows the bitterness of having his heart coldly exposed by the dark lanterns that others shine at it.

The new theatre, avant-garde in form and theory, is my major preoccupation. New York is the only place for taking the pulse of a new art of the theatre.

Outside of Madrid today the theatre, which is in its very essence a part of the life of the people, is almost dead, and the people suffer accordingly, as they would if they had lost two eyes or ears or a sense of taste. We [La Barraca] are going to give it back to them in the terms in which they used to know it, with the very plays they used to love. We are also going to give them new plays, plays of today, done in the modern manner, explained ahead of time very simply, and presented with that extreme simplification which will be necessary for the success of our plan and which makes the experimental theatre so interesting.

We believe we can do our part toward the great ideal of educating the people of our beloved Republic by means of restoring to them their own theatre.

The theatre is one of the most expressive and useful instruments for the edification of a country; it is also the barometer which marks its greatness or its descent. A theatre which is sensitive and well oriented in all its branches, from tragedy to vaudeville, can in a few years change the sensibility of the people; and a theatre which has been destroyed, in which cloven hooves take the place of wings, can put to sleep an entire nation.

A people that does not aid and encourage its theatre is moribund if not dead; the theatre which does not gather to itself the best of society and of history, the drama of its people and the genuine color of its landscape and its spirit, with laughter or with tears, does not

deserve to call itself theatre, but is rather a place for that horrible thing which is called killing time.

The idea of art for art's sake is something that would be cruel if it weren't, fortunately, so ridiculous. No decent person believes any longer in all that nonsense about pure art, art for art's sake.

I am totally Spanish and it would be impossible for me to live outside my geographical boundaries; but I hate whatever is Spanish just for the sake of being Spanish and nothing else. I am a brother to all men and I detest anyone who sacrifices himself for an abstract nationalist idea only because he loves his country with a blindfold on his eyes. A good Chinese is closer to me than a bad Spaniard. I sing of Spain and feel Spain in the marrow of my bones, but above all I am a citizen of the world and brother to all.

Quotations About Federico Garcia Lorca

Many times he himself. . . was a dramatic personage in his own life.
-Federico García Lorca, the poet's brother

He was a stimulus. A privileged being. It's hard to understand how he captured, how he was in tune with all the artistic currents of his time, without having traveled widely. He was an integral artist, attracted to everything. He could have been a genius as a musician, as a painter; he saw everything as a kind of poetry. . . . His humanity was extraordinary, capable of bringing out whatever was good in a person, things that a person might never have thought possible except in his presence.
-Regino Sainz de la Maza, guitarist and friend

[Lorca had] a liquid, dark, and warm voice, sometimes roughened by gaiety and sorrow. And his voice often had the musical accompaniment of his equally unforgettable laughter, that tremendous deep-toned laughter . . . generously lavished with the natural energy of his radiant youth, his irresistible congeniality, his superhuman charm that won over all listeners.
-José Luis Cano

The personality of Federico García Lorca produced an immense impression upon me. The poetic phenomenon in its entirety and "in the raw" presented itself before me suddenly in flesh and bone, confused, blood-red, viscous and sublime, quivering with a thousand fires of darkness and of subterranean biology, like all matter endowed with the originality of its own form.
-Salvador Dalí

At the recent premiere [of *Yerma*], mixing with those members of the audience who, in good faith but utterly mistakenly, were present in the theatre, there was gathered together an odd confraternity whose leader is the author of *Yerma*.
In the passages, in the foyer, in the bar, during the intervals, our ears were offended by effeminate voices. . . . It was a repellent spectacle. As repellent as the repulsive, filthy

phrases and scenes of the play, incompatible with human dignity and, naturally, with art. No decent woman could sit and watch the play, which ought to be brought to the attention of the Law, because it constitutes an offence against public decency.
-Review of the Madrid premiere of Yerma

This is the play I wish I had written.
-Miguel de Unamuno to Lorca, about Yerma

At least five times a day Lorca alluded to his own death. At night he could not get to sleep unless several of us went to "tuck him in." Once in bed, he still found ways to prolong indefinitely the most transcendental poetic conversations of the century. Almost always he came around to discussing death and especially his own death.
-Salvador Dalí

Speaking of Lorca: An Interview with René Buch

René Buch, the Artistic Director of Repertorio Español since its inception, has had extensive experience in directing Lorca. To be more precise, he has directed five productions of *Blood Wedding* (four of them at Repertorio), four of *The House of Bernarda Alba* (three at Repertorio), three versions of *Yerma*, plus *Don Perlimplín and Doña Rosita the Spinster* and Lorca's challenging late play, *The Audience (El publico)*.

In 1999, Buch finished a new production of *Bernarda Alba* that completed another cycle of directing the three great rural tragedies: *Bernarda, Blood Wedding, and Yerma.* In 2000, Repertorio Español plans to greet the new millennium by reviving all three recent productions and *The Audience* to run in repertory.

In this gathering of interview material from the 1990s, Buch reflects on his experience and his recent productions.

Q: How would you describe the changes in your approach to Lorca's plays over four decades of directing them?

A: What I've been trying to do is to refine my approach. Lorca said once that a play was like a poem standing up. What we're trying to do in all our productions is to put the poetry on its feet, so that people can respond to what he said.

Q: Have your ideas about Lorca's characters changed much over the years?

A: I think that I have refined them, more than anything. The characters are mythical.They're always the same, and they don't change. For instance in *Blood Wedding*, the symbolic character of the Moon, which Lorca specifies should be played by a man. I still feel what I felt in the other productions, that he should embody the sexuality that the play creates from the beginning. Everything is imbued with sexuality and death.

Blood Wedding (Bodas de sangre)

Q: What changed in the stage imagery as you worked through different versions of *Blood Wedding*?

A: Our first *Blood Wedding*, in 1973 with the Cuban movie star and theatre actress, Carmen Montejo, was staged in front of a large burlap cyclorama with splashes of paint in black, white and brown, like Jackson Pollock. It was earth. It was sky. We made the play very agricultural. In the center of the stage was this metal sculpture that went all the way up to the ceiling. It was made of scythes, hoes, and other farm implements, all in a mesh of black metal that represented the violence.

Later, when Ofelia González took over as the Mother, I took the metal thing out. It disturbed me because it was so big and attracted so much attention. Even then, I started "cleaning" the production to make the actor the center of the thing -- that's the style of the company.

In the 1978 production, the floor was also burlap with the splashes of paint, so the whole thing became sort of a sphere of burlap. In the last act, the Moon kept trying to get in and the Woodsmen were always trying to stop it. Everything became erotic in that production because I felt that the sex was pouring from the trees, from everything. Because by the time we get to the wood, the wood is the mons veneris, and the wood must exude sexuality.

In a third version, from the early 1980s, we were still using the burlap background, but Death wore an enormous cape that spread out to cover the whole stage. There was a hole in the center and Death was in that center and the Moon came out of a hole behind Death.And for our current production, we took out everything. We left the bare walls and four kettle drums. What we have striven for is to find the soul of the play. Not the earth, not the sky, not "these people are farmers and they have to look like farmers" or "the wedding is a wedding and it should be folkloric." We've erased all that because we feel that the wedding here is a ritual, and the ritual has no nationality.

Now with this production I have tried to get a monolithic style of acting, so that it becomes far more oriental, so that Ofelia becomes more a monolith, and she can just-be!

What I like about this new production is that it doesn't have a past, doesn't have a future, everything is happening, like in a painting by Juan Gris. There's a black presence, always there. It doesn't move, doesn't grow, doesn't evolve. Everything is, all the time.

Q: From one version to another, what problems does a director need to solve in *Blood Wedding*?

A: Its first big problem is the structure, which is somewhat flawed. The first and second acts are more or less real, but the third act is totally symbolic. I've seen productions of Blood Wedding in which the first and second acts had nothing to do with the third, and you say, "What is this? I was seeing a play, and now I'm seeing Martha Graham!"

So the first thing you have to do is unify the play and make it so that the Moon and Death and the Woodcutters are not extraneous.

What I did this last time was to consider that the play is a psychic representation of the mind of Lorca. I didn't want to direct a biographical, linear story, but I wanted to create the caverns of his mind.

I also decided to start with Death, which is the important thing in the play. I felt that unified the production.

And the shadow of the Mother that appears at the beginning-it's because of the mythical importance that this figure has.

Q: The lullaby sung by Leonardo's women -- you don't stage that as a real lullaby with a child.

A: Students may read those lines as if they are a real song sung to a child, but for me that "lullaby" is a nightmare. That's one of the places where the difference between the reading and the staging is very clear. I've even seen the lullaby staged with the Wife moving the cradle. But it can't be soothing!

The lullaby is a structural device It's the first time the horse comes in. Lorca puts the horse in the poetry, and that horse is going to become the real horse at the end of the third scene, and the horse that is going to take them away when they escape. And then in the last act, the Bridegroom is going to say, "There's only one horse in the world, and it's this one."

It's also a symbol within the tradition of Spanish classical theatre. In the seventeenth century, falling off a horse is taken to show that a man is slave to his passions. The horse has always been a representation of unleashed passion, so the horse had to be very important in the production.

Q: After all these productions, what do you find the enduring theme of *Blood Wedding*?

A: The point is that you have to pay for not doing what you really want to do. The Bride and Leonardo should have married. If they had had the guts to do it at the beginning when they were engaged, the play would never have happened. Everybody thinks that the theme of he play is the killing of the men before the play begins. But that's only a motivation for the Mother.

The important thing is that if you don't give in to your instinctual life, you'll pay for it. You have to accept the cost. The Mother accepts that. The Mother is the one who embodies the peripeteia [dramatic reversal]. She is the one who changes, the one who suddenly, by losing hope, cleanses herself.

The House of Bernarda Alba (La casa de Bernarda Alba)

Q: Your theme of the repressed instinctual life and its revenge-does that recur in Lorca's other tragedies?

A: Yes. It's the point in *Bernarda Alba*, where Adela accepts her fate. She wants her sexual life fulfilled, and the tragedy in this case is that she does it. But Bernarda is the tragic figure because she has done everything, and everything that she's done is wrong. At the end, I think she's destroyed by the death of Adela.

Q: In your 1999 production, is the fiercely dominating mother still the tragic heroine?

A: I haven't changed my point of view. She's like a communist who believes in the communist party, and by following instructions she's destroyed her family. When she comes to cry "Silencio" at the end of the play, she's aware of her tragedy and her destruction.

I don't like Bernarda to be a monster all the time. I see her as a victim. They're all victims of the society, the "black" Spain, the people who don't give in to sexuality. Puritanism is the greatest horror.

Q: Certainly different actresses create difference versions of this interpretation.

A: This one is more simple, far more intense. Because I don't have Ofelia González [who acted the lead for many years], but a new Bernarda, an actress from Cuba. She's young and very pretty and a powerful actress. So I have to change my approach. This woman is younger, more human, less the monster.

Q: What about the progress of your imagery in producing *Bernarda Alba*?

A: The first time we did *Bernarda*, we had enormously thick styrofoam walls and a roof of styrofoam, with holes for doors. People would come through the doors as if they were rats coming from holes. But for the second one we just used a wall of black mesh that made a corner.

Q: Is the new *Bernarda Alba* of 1999 another "black" production like *Blood Wedding* and *Yerma*, another stark and spare production that highlights the poetry?

A: It sure is. The scene is a labyrinth of things hanging-all black. It's like walls made of hanging things-ladders, etc.-and it covers the whole stage. Later, when the daughters are sewing, the material the girls sew covers the whole stage, too. There's no sitting down except in the third act, when they are supposed to be eating, but they're not eating, they're sitting on black cubes. It's far more abstract, it's less Spanish.

Q: Do you mean the characters and themes seem more universal?

A: Yes. The Moral Majority in this country has given me a hint that this could take place anywhere.

Yerma

Q: And how did you stage your most recent version of Yerma?

A: Again, I think the play is very simple, so we've done it with plainness, emptiness. The setting is very simple, with an arch and two walls at the sides and ropes that hang from the side of the stage. At the beginning, *Yerma* is at the center, holding those ropesas if she's giving birth. Then the rope becomes the symbol of her death or, as some people saw it, an umbilical cord. At the end, she kills Juan with the ropes.

When they go into the scene where the laundresses come to the river to wash, the laundresses bring in a long, white piece of material, a long white sheet, which becomes the laundry and the water. Again, the whole thing is very abstract.

Q: And the theme of death coming from the repression of emotions and desire?

A: *Yerma* is exactly the same. She wants to have a baby, and she should have a baby with Victor. She can't have it with her husband, Juan. And because she doesn't do that with Victor, she has to kill Juan -- she has to kill her baby.

Yerma is a poor woman, in the sense that she's a woman who cannot help herself. She is acted upon. I see her as a case not of tragedy but of fixation. But it's never a melodrama, because it has a more cosmic conception. It deals with the earth and the fruitfulness of the earth and the society that stops it.

Q: Is this sense of the earth's presence and power familiar from the other trilogy plays?

A: There's the horse in *Bernarda Alba*, the horse in *Blood Wedding*, the sexuality of both plays and the idea that in the moment when you let your own sexuality dictate what you do, you find yourself in opposition to society. That's the Bride in *Blood Wedding*, and also *Yerma*. Yerma is the Bride who doesn't run away with Leonardo. She's just the opposite. She feels passion. It's very clear in the play that Victor is the man for her. But she doesn't act on it. She follows orders.

Q: What's your view of her husband, Juan?

A: I think Juan is a very honest, decent, good worker who loves his wife and wants to do things for her, but doesn't understand that the idea of not wanting a child can ruin their marriage. He says, "Bring the child of your sister and we'll rear him." He doesn't understand the necessity for a child, and in a sense he's delighted because he doesn't have the responsibility of a child.

It's probably something in their DNA that they don't mix, the two of them. But he's not bad, not a monster. Our sympathy goes to both Juan and Yerma. It's as if they were trying to open a door with a glass or a cup instead of a key-with an object that doesn't fit.

Producing Lorca Today

Q: Have you followed the same technique of refining your stage imagery with Lorca's other plays?

A: Yes, we did Doña Rosita with just a platform and a scrim in the back. Everything was white: the floor, all the costumes, whatever little furniture we had. So that when the rose comes in in the second act, this real red rose was the first touch of color in the whole production. I've never seen a redder rose in my life!

Q: Why is this your style in this period?

A: We simplify and abstract the plays in order to emphasize symbols and to focus the attention exclusively on what is said or done by the actor. That's the effect we are after. Note how the horse appears first in the lullaby and then enters physically. We make the image in a poem so real that it can take away the Bride. The action always stems from the poetry.

Q: What is the connection of those plays to how we live today?

A: I think it's basic that we understand where we come from, who we are. The problem with the culture today is that people have no basic securities. Our questioning is too much. I very much like questioning things-I'm always questioning everything-but you have to be like a pendulum with a center that holds you while you swing in opposite directions. I don't like anarchy. Art is order.

Q: What is it, after seventy years, that makes these plays so powerful?

A: It's all very simple. Lorca is the simplest of playwrights. Intellectually he's not simple, but basic, which is different. Lorca is not society-minded. He doesn't write for the social world but for the ages. And he talks about universality. At a time when people are so concerned with the minutiae of society or politics, he's a breath of fresh air. He's clean.

Lorca is one of the greats. Lorca, Brecht, Pirandello, Beckett-those are people who have made a statement for our century.

Federico Garcia Lorca – Poetry in Spanish and English

The following lines are among Lorca's greatest poetry written for the stage. Use the Spanish originals and the most well-known English translations, by James Graham-Luján and Richard L. O'Connell, to investigate his images, rhythms, and ideas.

Bodas de Sangre (Blood Wedding,1933)

Act 3, scene 1

Luna --	Moon
Cisne redondo en el río	Round swan in the river
ojo de las catedrales	and a cathedral's eye,
alba fingida en las hojas	false dawn on the leaves,
soy; ¡no podrán escaparse!	they'll not escape; these things am I!
¿Quién se oculta? ¿Quién solloza	Who is hiding? And who sobs
por la maleza del valle?	in the thornbrakes of the valley?
La luna deja un cuchillo	The moon sets a knife
abandonado en el aire	abandoned in the air
que siendo acecho de plomo	which being a leaden threat
quiere ser dolor de sangre	yearns to be blood's pain.
¡Dejadme entrar! ¡Vengo helada	Let me in! I come freezing
por paredes y cristales!	through the walls and windows!
¡Abrir tejados y pechos	Open roofs, open breasts
donde pueda calentarme!	where I may warm myself!
¡Tengo frío! Mis cenizas	I'm cold! My ashes
de soñolientos metales	of somnolent metals
buscan la cresta del fuego	seek the fire's crest
por los montes y las calles	on mountains and streets.
Pero me lleva la nieve	But the snow carries me
sobre su espalda de jaspe	upon its mottled back
y me anega, dura y fría	and pools soak me
el agua de los estanques	in their water, hard and cold.
Pues esta noche tendrán	But this night there will be
mis mejillas roja sangre	red blood for my cheeks,
y los juncos agrupados	and for the reeds that cluster
en los anchos pies del aire	at the wide feet of the wind.
¡No haya sombra ni emboscada	Let there be neither shadow nor bower,
que no puedan escaparse!	let them never get away!
¡Que quiero entrar en un pecho	O let me enter a breast
para poder calentarme!	where I may get warm!
¡Un corazón para mí!	A heart for me!
¡Caliente, que se derrame	Warm! That will spurt
por los montes de mi pecho	over the mountains of my chest;
dejadme entrar, ¡ay, dejadme!	let me come in, oh let me!
A las ramas.	To the branches.
No quiero sombras. Mis rayos	I want no shadows. My rays
han de entrar en todas partes	must get in everywhere,
y haya en los troncos oscuros	even among the dark trunks I want
un rumor de claridades	the whisper of gleaming lights,
para que esta noche tengan	so that this night there will be
mis mejillas dulce sangre	sweet blood for my cheeks,

y los juncos agrupados	and for the reeds that cluster
en los anchos pies del aire	at the wide feet of the wind.
¿Quién se oculta? ¡Afuera digo!	Who is hiding? Out, I say!
¡No! ¡No podrán escaparse!	No! They will not get away!
Yo haré lucir al caballo	I will light up the horse
una fiebre de diamante	with a fever bright as diamonds.

Yerma (1934)
Act 2, scene 2

Yerma (as though dreaming):

¡Ay qué prado de pena!	Oh, what a field of sorrow!
¡Ay qué puerta cerrada a la hermosura!	Oh, this is a door to beauty closed
que pido un hijo que sufrir y el aire	to beg a son to suffer, and for the wind
me ofrece dalias de dormida luna.	to offer dahlias of a sleeping moon!
Estos dos manantiales que yo tengo	These two teeming springs I have
de leche tibia, son en la espesura	of warm milk are in the closeness
de mi carne, dos pulsos de caballo,	of my flesh two rhythms of a horse's gallop,
que hacen latir la rama de mi angustia.	to make vibrate the branch of my anguish.
¡Ay pechos ciegos bajo mi vestido!	Oh, breasts, blind beneath my clothes!
¡Ay palomas sin ojos ni blancura!	Oh, doves, with neither eyes nor whiteness!
¡Ay qué dolor de sangre prisionera	Oh, what pain of imprisoned blood
me está clavando avispas en la nuca!	is nailing wasps at my brain's base!
Pero tú has de venir, amor, mi niño,	But you must come, sweet love, my baby,
porque el agua da sal, la tierra fruta,	because water gives salt, the earth fruit,
y nuestro vientre guarda tiernos hijos	and our wombs guard tender infants,
como la nube lleva dulce lluvia.	just as a cloud is sweet with rain.

La Casa de Bernarda Alba
(The House of Bernarda Alba, 1936)

Act III

Poncia:

¡No entres!	Don't go in!

Bernarda:

No. ¡Yo no! Pepe: tú iras corriendo vivo	No, not I! -- Pepe, you're running now, alive,
por lo oscuro de las alamedas, pero otro día	the darkness, under the trees, but another day
caerás. ¡Descolgarla! ¡Mi hija ha muerto	you'll fall. Cut her down! My daughter died a
virgen¡ Llevadla a cuarto y vestirla	virgin. Take her to another room and dress her
como una doncella. ¡Nadie diga nada!	as though she were a virgin. No one will say
Ella ha muerto virgen. Avisad que al	anything about this! She died a virgin. Tell
amanecer den dos clamores las campanas.	them so that at dawn, the bells will ring twice.

Martirio:

Dichosa ella mil veces que lo pudo tener.

A thousand times happy she, who had him.

Bernarda:

Y no quiero llantos. La muerte hay que mirarla cara a cara. ¡silencio!
A otra hija: ¡A callar he dicho!
A otra hija: ¡Las lágrimas cuando estés sola! Nos hundiremos todas en un mar de luto. Ella, la hija menor de Bernarda Alba, ha muerto virgen! ¿Me habéis oído? ¡Silencio, silencio he dicho! ¡Silencio!

And I want no weeping . Death must be looked at face to face. Silence!
To one daughter. Be still, I said!
To another daughter. Tears when you're alone! We'll drown ourselves in a sea of mourning. She, the youngest daughter of Bernarda Alba, died a virgin. Did you hear me? Silence, silence, I said! Silence!

Bodas de Sangre Synopsis

Act 1, scene 1

The Bridegroom asks his Mother for a knife to use for cutting grapes. For her, knives are evil, even for agricultural purposes. Two of her three men have died, stabbed in fights with men of the Félix family-first her husband, before he could give her even a third child, then her elder son. Now that her younger son's time to father children has come, she is filled with foreboding. Still, she tells him to buy fine stockings for his Bride, and they will ask for the girl's hand on Sunday. Soon a neighbor stops by, full of gossip: people say the Bride's former sweetheart, now married to her cousin, is Leonardo-a Félix!

Act 1, scene 2

In Leonardo's house, his Wife and Mother-in-Law sing an appalling "lullaby" about a dying horse. The Wife, pregnant again, scolds Leonardo for his strange behavior-people have seen him running his horse too hard, far across the plains -- then tells him of her cousin's upcoming wedding. When a girl comes in, chattering about the lavish gifts the Bridegroom has bought, Leonardo reacts harshly and then leaves. The women, weeping, repeat the lullaby.

Act 1, scene 3

The Mother and the Bridegroom arrive at the remote home of the Bride. Her Father is pleased with the match, and the wedding is planned for the Bride's twenty-second birthday. The Bride acts subdued, serious. After the visit, the Servant tells the Bride that she saw Leonardo ride by the house late the night before. The Bride objects vehemently, calling the woman a liar. Suddenly, they hear a horse outside. The rider is Leonardo.

Act 2, scene 1
The wedding day. The Servant prattles to the troubled Bride about marriage beds as the distant chorus of wedding guests approaches. The first one to reach the house is Leonardo. He accuses the Bride of having rejected him because he was poor, of pushing him into his marriage. She accuses him of spying on her and says that soon she will have a husband to fill all her thoughts. But Leonardo insists that her feelings, like his, are too deeply rooted to wither. He tells the horrified Servant not to worry-he will never speak to the Bride again. When the guests come to take the Bride off to the church, she clings to the Bridegroom, eager to have the ceremony behind her. Leonardo and his wife leave last, together and unhappy.

Act 2, scene 2
Everyone returns from the church for the wedding party. The Bride's Father and the Bridegroom's Mother discuss Leonardo's bad blood and hope for many grandchildren. The Bridegroom is happy and ready to dance with the Bride, but she says she needs to go to her room and rest -- alone. Just as the Mother is giving her son advice on making a wife happy, Leonardo's Wife announces that her husband and the new Bride have ridden off together on his horse. The Bridegroom goes off in pursuit, his Mother urging him on: "The hour of blood has come again."

Act 3, scene 1
In the forest at night, three woodcutters are convinced the fleeing couple will be found and killed. They also predict death for the Bridegroom. The Moon, hungry for blood, lights up the woods for Death, who appears as an old crone. Death leads the Bridegroom off in search of his prey. The Bride and Leonardo enter, appalled at the enormity of their sin but utterly overpowered by their passion. Death returns to speak while, offstage, the Bridegroom and Leonardo kill each other simultaneously in a knife fight.

Act 3, scene 2
Little girls wind a skein of red yarn, singing and talking of a thread of blood that comes closer and closer as the men's bodies are carried back from the forest. Leonardo's Wife is there: she will live in seclusion with her children. The Bridegroom's Mother enters with a Neighbor. The Bride arrives. Though she is still a virgin, she has lost her innocence. She begs her husband's Mother to grant her a cruel death. The Mother refuses. The women will live, mourning as women do. The Mother talks of men killing each other, of "the tiny knife . . . that slides in clean through the astonished flesh and stops at . . . the dark root of a scream."

Yerma Synopsis

Act 1, scene 1

Yerma has been married two years. She wants to strengthen her husband, Juan, so he can give her children. Telling Yerma to stay at home, Juan goes back to his work in the olive groves, and Yerma talks to the child she wishes she were carrying. María, married five months and already pregnant, asks Yerma to sew for the baby. Yerma fears that if she too doesn't conceive soon, her blood will turn to poison. The couple's friend, Victor, sees Yerma sewing and assumes she is pregnant. His advice, when he learns the truth: try harder!

Act 1, scene 2

Yerma has just taken Juan his dinner in the fields. On the road home, she encounters an Old Woman who insists that passion is the key to conception. Yerma admits a secret longing for Victor, but none for Juan. She then meets two girls whose attitudes astonish her. One has left her baby untended. The other is childless and glad of it, although her mother, Dolores, is giving her herbs for pregnancy. Next Victor comes along, and the conversation between Victor and Yerma becomes tense with unspoken thoughts and desires. Juan enters, worrying about what people will say if Yerma stays out chatting. He tells her he intends to work all night. Yerma will sleep alone.

Act 2, scene 1

It is three years later. Five Laundresses gossip about a woman who still has no children, who has been looking at another man, and whose husband has brought in his sisters to keep an eye her. We know they mean Yerma. The laundresses sing about husbands and lovemaking and babies.

Act 2, scene 2

Juan's two sisters guard Yerma. She refuses to stay at home, and people are talking. Without children in it, her house seems like a prison to her. Her marriage has turned bitter. María (from Act 1, scene 1) visits, but reluctantly, since the sight of her baby always makes Yerma weep. The childless girl (from Act 1, scene 2) says her mother, Dolores, is expecting Yerma. Victor comes in to say goodbye. He is leaving the region while things are still unspoken between them. When Juan goes out with Victor, Yerma makes her escape to see Dolores.

Act 3, scene 1

Dawn finds Yerma at Dolores's house. Dolores and the Old Woman (from Act 1, scene 2) have been praying over Yerma all night in the cemetery. Juan accuses Yerma of deceit, and she curses her blood, her body, and her father "who left me the blood of the father of a hundred sons."

Act 3, scene 2

Near a hermitage high in the mountains, a place to which many barren women, including Yerma, have made a pilgrimage. Young men are there, hoping to father a child or to win a woman away from her husband. The Old Woman tells Yerma to leave Juan, whose people are "nothing but spit" and take up with her son, who is "made of blood," but Yerma's honor precludes such a thought. Juan overhears and tells Yerma to give up wanting a child, to be content with what she has. Realizing that Juan never did and never will want a child, Yerma strangles him, thus killing her only hope of ever bearing a child. "Don't come near me, because I've killed my son," she cries to the onlookers. "I myself have killed my son!"

La Casa de Bernarda Alba Synopsis

Act 1

Bernarda's maid, Poncia, and the kitchen servant discuss their tyrannical mistress and the funeral of her second husband, who sired all of her five daughters but the eldest. The servants are readying the house for the mourners. Alone, the kitchen servant sends a beggar away empty-handed so that she herself may keep the scraps. She also gloats over the death of her lascivious master and affects sorrow when Bernarda enters with a huge crowd of women. While the men drink outside, the women talk. Bernarda shows her colors: she is cynical about the poor, harsh with her daughters, sanctimonious about how women should behave, and vicious about others' shortcomings.

She dismisses her guests abruptly to their gossip and seems eager for the isolation which eight years of mourning will impose on her grown daughters and her house. Poncia says it is time for the daughters to have husbands, but Bernarda insists there are no men worthy of them. We see the daughters alone. Martirio, the sickly one, talks to Amelia about how she thinks men are frightening and not to be trusted because they use women. Magdalena says everybody is talking about how Pepe el Romano, the handsomest man in the region, is coming to ask for the hand of Angustias, who at 40 is the eldest and richest of the sisters. The youngest, 20-year old Adela, scoffs at the idea. She wears a new green dress, furious at having to waste her youth. Pepe el Romano comes down the street, and all the girls run to watch.

Bernarda berates Angustias for wearing powder and tells the others she will rule in hwn house as long as she lives. María Josefa, the senile grandmother, enters. She wants to go away from all these spinsters and marry a beautiful man from the sea.

Act 2

Poncia and all the daughters but Adela are embroidering. Poncia is sure that something is seriously amiss with Adela. Martirio, too, is suspicious. Pepe el Romano was at Angustias's window until 1:30, but Amelia and Poncia heard his horse much later. Adela enters, tired and aching. When the others go to look at laces, Poncia accuses Adela of having been with Pepe el Romano and counsels her to be patient. Angustias is too old and too narrow to survive childbirth, and soon enough Pepe will marry the youngest. Adela is defiant.

The sisters come in with their laces and talk about the freedom men have, for example this year's group of reapers who come all the way from the mountains. Martirio is telling Amelia she has been hearing someone in the yard at night, perhaps "an unbroken little mule," when Angustias bursts in with the news that one of the sisters has stolen her picture of Pepe el Romano. When the dust settles, the culprit is identified-the sour and sickly Martirio!

Poncia again warns Bernarda that something very grave is happening because the daughters have had no freedom and the pressure is building intolerably. Poncia suggests that perhaps Pepe should marry Adela. Bernarda refuses to listen. A commotion erupts outside the house, and everyone but Adela and Martirio runs to see what it is. Martirio has seen Adela in Pepe's arms and threatens to expose her sister. Just then everybody returns with news. An unmarried girl who has just killed her new-born baby is being dragged through the town by a mob. To Adela's horror, Bernarda screams, "Kill her!"

Act 3

Prudencia visits her friend Bernarda and the daughters, and the conversation is of Bernarda's stallion and Angustias's forthcoming wedding to Pepe. When Adela goes out to walk in the dark, two sisters accompany her. Bernarda advises Angustias never to ask Pepe why he seems distracted around her and to forget about Martirio and the picture. The secret to getting along is putting up a good front, always.

Poncia warns Bernarda that a calm exterior is no proof of a calm heart, but Bernarda trusts her own watchfulness to avert tragedy. Poncia and the Servant are sure Adela will act, the Servant because she thinks Bernarda's is a bad family, but Poncia believes they are just women without men.

The house is quiet when Adela sneaks outside. María Josefa enters, carrying a lamb and rambling on about having babies. Martirio sends her grandmother to bed. When Martirio calls, Adela comes in covered with straw. She will endure any humiliation, even become his mistress, to have Pepe. Bernarda sees what has happened and rushes out to get her gun and shoot Pepe. When Martirio reports that Pepe is "done away with," Adela rushes to her room. Martirio knows Bernarda's shot has missed, but her lie has not. Adela hangs herself offstage. When Bernarda learns this, she ends the play insisting her youngest died a virgin and calling for "Silence!"

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