

# Federico García Lorca's 'Impossible' Theatre Staged

By

DANIEL JAMES TYLER

A thesis submitted to the  
University of Birmingham  
for the degree of  
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Drama & Theatre Arts  
School of English, Drama and American & Canadian Studies  
College of Arts and Law  
University of Birmingham  
September 2011

UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

**University of Birmingham Research Archive**

**e-theses repository**

This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation.

Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the relatively unknown area of Federico García Lorca's theatre work which he himself termed 'impossible' and 'unperformable'. With the director's task of pre-production research in mind, the study examines biographical research as well as focusing discussion on Lorca's experimentation – as playwright and director – with different artistic styles and techniques seen as ground-breaking in his own time which pre-empted much modern theatre practice. Analysis of primary sources provides a widespread overview of Lorca's dramatic work: his better-known plays, 'impossible' plays, dramatic dialogues and fragments of incomplete pieces as well as interviews and speeches.

Key sources include the theories and ideas of professional directors (most prominently Lluís Pasqual) and scholars of Spanish theatre (especially Maria M. Delgado and Gwynne Edwards) as well as biographers (particularly Leslie Stainton).

Principally concerned with the challenges presented to modern theatre-makers and the possibilities and guides for directors tackling these plays, the study concludes with reflection on the production of *An Impossible Dream of Life* which was composed from Lorca's *The Dream of Life* and extracts from his other works to make up the practice-based component of this research project.

## CONTENTS

- i. **Notes on translations**
  
- p. 1 **Introduction**
  
- p. 3 **Part One: 'The Impossible Federico'**  
*Considerations when approaching Lorquian theatre*
  - A politics of theatre
  - Questions of style and technique
  - The 'known' Lorcás
  
- p. 16 **Part Two: 'The Impossible Theatre'**  
*Lorca's 'unperformable' plays on page and stage*
  - *El público*
  - *Así Que Pasen Cinco Años*
  - *El sueño de la vida*
  
- p. 28 **Part Three: 'An Impossible Dream'**  
*Directing (and finishing) 'The Dream of Life'*
  
- p. 36 **Conclusion**
  
- p. 40 **Bibliography**

## NOTES ON TRANSLATIONS

1. I have translated source material originally in Spanish which have no published English version available.
2. The Spanish words 'poeta' and 'autor' have often been translated as 'poet' and 'author', but this study prefers the translation 'playwright' with regards to Lorca's plays. Although in existence since the late nineteenth century, the word 'dramaturgo' has only more recently been used for playwrights in Spanish-speaking countries and does not appear in texts by Lorca. Therefore, with Lorca's theatre-making work under examination here and the context of these Lorquian 'poeta' and 'autor' characters as writers of the play concerned, the translation of 'playwright' seems the most suitable.
3. The play *El público* is often translated as *The Public*, however, as this study indicates, the translation *The Audience* stands out as the most appropriate.
4. The play *Así Que Pasen Cinco Años* is famously problematic to translate. This study prefers *When Five Years Pass*, elsewhere 'When' is often replaced with 'As', 'If' or 'Once'.

## INTRODUCTION

The fascination surrounding Federico García Lorca and his works has been termed the 'cult of Lorca'<sup>1</sup>, holding irresistible attraction for theatre-makers and academics since his execution at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. However, by leaving works unfinished and unperformed, Lorca's early death, John London posits, meant not only that his extant works were 'the product of a martyr, but his murder also created a distortion which has never been fully rectified'<sup>2</sup>: with his theatrical future prematurely ended and subsequently under-explored, the Lorca best-known for *Blood Wedding* and *The House of Bernarda Alba* 'would remain a colourful, castanet-clicking gypsy with a tragic, social conscience'<sup>3</sup> in the chronicles of theatre history. Visiting Spain's Museo Nacional de Teatro confirms this, where only one of his many lesser-known works is mentioned<sup>4</sup>.

In the past few decades Lorca's lesser-known work has come into focus. This interest appears to stem from their distinctly experimental nature for their time (similarly, across the Franco-Spanish border, Antonin Artaud was creating comparable dramas and manifestoes). Several of these attractively enigmatic texts are fragmentary, offering short and mostly incomplete glimpses into Lorca's 'other' work, discussion of which he preferred above all else, according to friends. Several were aware of the visionary quality of these pieces; Leslie Stainton describes one colleague's statement that 'Lorca's experimental work epitomized "the theater of the future"'.<sup>5</sup> Although Lorca saw his 'true purpose...in these plays'<sup>6</sup>, the playwright himself termed this area of his dramaturgy 'unperformable'; he was after all a professional theatre-maker, well aware of the socio-cultural context of production at the time, acknowledging the necessity to maintain financial stability. He often railed against economic restrictions, stating that, 'whilst actors and playwrights are solely in the hands of commercial companies...theatre collapses more each day, without the possibility of

salvation'<sup>7</sup>. This became an aspect of a theatrical revolution Lorca wanted to instigate, creating his own politics of theatre.

This study is concerned with how Lorca 'has proved such a potent referent for [those] grappling with the conceptual, philosophical and material remains of [this] artform'<sup>8</sup> and possible considerations for a director when approaching, in particular, his 'impossible' plays. With the unfinished nature of Lorca's 'impossible' theatre in mind, I believe exploration into his other works and the intentions behind their initial creation, his own practice and, to some extent, life will form a useful starting point for my own creative response to the 'impossible' texts. The first part of the study will explore biographical details, including Lorca's own directing work; stylistic features of his plays, including metatheatre, visual dramaturgy and intertextuality; and aspects of his 'better-known' works which may assist theatre-makers' engagement with the 'impossible' pieces. The second part will examine the three main 'impossible' plays – *The Audience*, *When Five Years Pass* and *The Dream of Life* – considering the unique challenges they present, and significant past productions that 'served to re-envisage Lorca, introducing audiences to hitherto unknown areas of his repertoire'<sup>9</sup>. Emphasis will be on the directors' concepts and re-working, adaptive strategies. Subsequently, the final part will reflect upon my own directorial response to Lorca and my 'finished' version of one of his incomplete works.

---

<sup>1</sup> See especially Smith, P.J. *The Theatre of García Lorca: Text, Performance, Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 105 and Delgado, M.M. *Federico García Lorca (Routledge Modern and Contemporary Dramatists)* (London: Routledge, 2008): 5, 11-36, 173-201

<sup>2</sup> García Lorca, F. *The Unknown Federico García Lorca*, ed. John London (London: Atlas Press, 1996): 7

<sup>3</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 7

<sup>4</sup> Visit on 12/07/2011, the permanent exhibition includes reference to only *When Five Years Pass*

<sup>5</sup> Stainton, L. *Lorca: A Dream of Life*. (London: Bloomsbury, 1998): 342

<sup>6</sup> 'En estas comedias imposibles está mi verdadero propósito.' (My translation) García Lorca, F. *Obras completas, vol. III*, 2nd ed. ed. Arturo del Hoyo (Madrid: Aguilar, 1986): 674

<sup>7</sup> 'Mientras que actores y autores estén en manos de empresas absolutamente comerciales,...el teatro entero se hundirá cada día más, sin salvación posible.' (My translation) García Lorca, F. *Obras completas*: 460

<sup>8</sup> Delgado, M.M. *op.cit.*: 135

<sup>9</sup> Delgado, M.M. *ibid.*: 121

**PART ONE: 'THE IMPOSSIBLE FEDERICO'**  
*Considerations when approaching Lorquian theatre*

**A politics of theatre**

By the 1930s Lorca's main occupation was theatre, which he stated should exist 'to educate the masses'<sup>1</sup>. Consistently reluctant to associate formally with politics, even as the political situation in Spain worsened and sped towards the Civil War, and in spite of growing pressure, he attempted to be seen as allied to neither political side. Nevertheless, Lorca's outlook was always socialist and although no overriding political ideology can be seen through his writings, there are indicators. One example is his reaction to the bloodshed of a failed revolution in October 1934. When questioned why *La Barraca* - his student company funded by the socialist government to tour theatre to ordinary Spanish people - had not programmed performances, he answered: 'How are we going to perform when there are so many widows in Spain!'<sup>2</sup> With increasing revolutionary momentum, Lorca's response to the suggestion of the prohibition of performances displays his typical passion: 'we'll perform in caves and create secret theatre'<sup>3</sup>.

Lorca's was a politics of theatre; he wanted to revolutionise theatre, preoccupied with how it could serve the people, calling it 'one of the most expressive and useful instruments for the edification of a country and the barometer which measures its rise or fall.'<sup>4</sup> To this end, the most overtly political activity Lorca undertook was the founding of *La Barraca*, aiming to take classic Spanish plays from bourgeois ownership and transport them to the Spanish, working-class provinces: 'to give back to the people what [was] rightfully theirs'<sup>5</sup>. Within this socialist agenda *La Barraca* attracted negative response from the right-wing press from the outset and activists attempted to disrupt performances, insulting and threatening to attack performers, and even throwing stones. This attention was obviously unwelcome; Lorca



wanted *La Barraca* to remain apolitical, but the company's whole history was plagued by the fact that its existence was thanks to a left-wing government's agenda. However, alongside its detractors came positive responses, heralded for symbolising 'freedom'<sup>6</sup>, hailed for its 'extremely intelligent direction'<sup>7</sup>, and celebrated for its intentions set out by journalist Mildred Adams' quoting of Lorca:

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 eyes or ears or sense of taste. We are going to give it back to them.<sup>8</sup>

Lorca assigned great importance to the company, calling it his main occupation, the activity that enthused him the most, much more than his literary work<sup>9</sup>. This clear motivation grew from his view of theatre as

A school of tears and laughter and an open forum where men can dispute out-dated or mistaken morals and illustrate, with living examples, the eternal truths of the heart and soul of man.<sup>10</sup>

This vision could prove useful to a theatre-maker wanting to understand Lorca's motivation for his work. His extensive work as director – of *La Barraca*, *Antisfora* amateur group and several professional productions – provides an idea of his approaches to staging, his directorial techniques and his presence in the rehearsal room. Stainton explains how Lorca's rehearsal methods included blocking in great detail; instructing actors clearly on what to do and when, often illustrated by acting out the part himself; that he was demanding, but never patronizing or intimidating<sup>11</sup>; and that 'observers were struck by Lorca's tenacity as a director' with one proclaiming him a 'slave driver!'<sup>12</sup> Lorca gave utmost importance to the directorial function, stating, perhaps slightly conceitedly, 'theatre is, principally, a good director'<sup>13</sup>. Lorca was driven to explore directorial possibilities, in spite of going against current practice; Maria Delgado highlights Lorca's alignment with 'the craft of directing at a time where the role...was frequently assumed by the actor/actress-manager'<sup>14</sup>. This habit of

breaking with the norm was reflected in his flouting of etiquette (such as consistently arriving late to rehearsals), leading to one actress-manager – his friend Margarita Xirgu – nicknaming him 'the impossible Federico'<sup>15</sup>.

Undoubtedly, Lorca's directing work played a part in the development of his own writing, which he undertook alongside production duties. His method for developing scripts saw him reading versions to his artistic friends, a process often taking years from first draft to final performance text, if, indeed, that point was reached; several of his works were not published during his lifetime. Those present at such readings reported his 'incredibly malleable' voice, suggesting that 'he was practically a ventriloquist.'<sup>16</sup> This personal talent appears to have reinforced his demands on his actors, drilling them on accents and intonation. He also eliminated the prompter, having previously been situated in a box at the foot of the stage where they fed actors most lines and cues, and 'demanded the actors learn the entire play.'<sup>17</sup>

Although aware of his own talent, Lorca can be seen to display a certain amount of modesty, reflected especially in his work with *La Barraca*, whose humble uniform of blue overalls gave the troupe the look of workers, indicating their hope to associate with the Spanish working classes. On tour, a man told Lorca he looked like a machine-worker; Lorca replied, humbly, 'well, at the moment, I'm nothing more than a theatre director.'<sup>18</sup>

### **Questions of style and technique**

Gwynne Edwards proposes that Lorca's experience taught him that classic plays 'could only be meaningful for a modern and largely uncultured audience if they were performed in a

lively and imaginative manner, unencumbered by...traditional, suffocating realism and heavy-handedness'.<sup>19</sup> Apparently a new style was sought after, and although there is agreement that Lorca's practical theatrical experience 'had taught him...how to write plays'<sup>20</sup>, both his directing work and play texts subscribe to no single style. Critics at the time noted his experimentation; Stainton describes *Blood Wedding's* première being reviewed as revolutionary, whilst more conservative critics protested against the experimental personification of the Moon and Death onstage<sup>21</sup>. Similarly, following a performance of *Doña Rosita the Spinster* reviewers were preoccupied with ascertaining the play's genre and style, but 'nearly everyone praised the originality and power of Lorca's script'.<sup>22</sup>

Stylistic questions overwhelm Lorquian theatre. Delgado points to several, diverse styles at play whilst highlighting Lorca's attraction to surrealism as 'the expression of the inexpressible'<sup>23</sup>, whilst Edwards states that it 'provided Lorca with the kind of artistic liberty encountered already in Symbolism and the tradition of the puppet-play.'<sup>24</sup> Referring to Lorca's fusing of styles, Edwards discusses how *Blood Wedding* employs 'a largely symbolist mode of expression, even though...surrealist influence is still apparent',<sup>25</sup> and suggests that although Lorca's works can be viewed through diversifying analyses, if taken as an oeuvre the interrelations are clear, highlighting that 'in the surrealist plays and the rural tragedies...the imprint of the puppet-plays and farces is still clearly visible in the human characters.'<sup>26</sup> When asked if they were real or symbolic, Lorca's answer incorporated both options: these were real characters who personified symbols<sup>27</sup>.

Lorca can be seen on a 'genuine quest for a new theatrical style'<sup>28</sup>, embodied within his innovative staging techniques and atypical selection of plays for *La Barraca*. His ideas have

been linked to the idea of total theatre with comparisons drawn to his French contemporary Antonin Artaud<sup>29</sup> and Lorca's staging of classic texts described as 'essentially modern, blending settings, dialogue, dances, songs, costume and movement into an effective and absorbing whole.'<sup>30</sup> His 1933 production of *Fuenteovejuna* was considered innovative for its modern dress which, although an approach famously employed a decade earlier in Britain in Shakespearean productions by Barry Jackson, represented a stark break with the traditions of Spanish theatre. Further insight to Lorca's stylistic choices comes from Stainton's description of Lorca's direction of *Yerma* which included stylised, rhythmical movement for the chorus of washerwomen<sup>31</sup>. Lorca was afforded opportunities to experiment with a musical influences, commentators<sup>32</sup> have noted how he worked on plays musically with enthusiastic focus pace, timing and the 'fundamentality of rhythm'<sup>33</sup> – a key point for directors to bear in mind.

Many of Lorca's plays are metatheatrical and he was clearly preoccupied with not only enacting but also commenting on 'engagement with the politics and function of theatre'<sup>34</sup> and his theatrical revolution through performance. Several of his plays present theatrical workings and workers onstage as well as utilising Lorca's frequently employed dramatic feature: the prologue, spoken by poets/playwrights, directors and dramatists. Fittingly, beginning almost a century of scholarship linking his life to his theatre, Lorca not only introduced *La Barraca's* performances, but he also acted as the playwright or director role in plays. Even without a speaking role, Lorca's presence in the theatre was always tangible, often seeing him called onto stage for applause, even during performances.<sup>35</sup> In an impromptu, late-night performance of *The Puppet Play of Don Cristobal* in Argentina, Lorca made characters refer to him and actress Lola Membrives, enjoying toying with levels of

reality. This new, unique version also included a director whose bossy manner was reminiscent of Lorca's own rehearsal room behaviour<sup>36</sup> - again, the image of Lorca transcends the limitations of reality and theatricality. As will be discussed later, scholars and directors alike have asserted that the 'Autor' in *The Dream of Life* is the image – and staged political voice – of Lorca, whilst the Young Man in *When Five Years Pass* has been presented as Lorca several times.

A prevalent motif in Lorca's intertextual experiments is his reference to Shakespeare's works. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is subject of the rehearsals in *The Dream of Life* and appears elsewhere as something of a favourite of Lorca's. Delgado sees him fascinated with the play 'whose traces similarly haunt *The Public...*and Act 3, Scene 1 of *Blood Wedding*, [and] can be observed in *The Butterfly's Evil Spell's* treatment of an enchanted space'<sup>37</sup>. The latter play's prologue even describes a 'sylph who had escaped from a play by the great Shakespeare'<sup>38</sup> whilst the Magician in *The Audience* suggests to the Director: 'If you'd made use of the 'love-in-idleness' flower which Shakespeare uses...the show would in all probability have succeeded.'<sup>39</sup> Shakespeare's influence on Lorca is thus visible throughout his work, both stylistically and through appropriation of characters and plot motifs. Lorca appears to have seen Shakespeare as both inspiration and conspirator, with whom he 'clearly shared...a tragic perception of events'<sup>40</sup> and in whom he found 'both a sense of the universality and the timelessness of things, as well as a tragic vision with which he could identify.'<sup>41</sup>

Referring to the importance of design, and the musicality mentioned earlier, Lorca claimed that 'half the production depends on rhythm, colour and scenography'<sup>42</sup>. Approaching

Lorca's style depends, therefore, on due consideration to what can be termed his visual dramaturgy. Lorca carefully chose and worked closely with designers, often initially designing costumes himself. In his precise stage directions, Lorca establishes a keen sense of his plays' visual worlds. Most modern directors have not felt commitment to the exact detail required by these directions, but nevertheless they do indicate Lorca's own imagery and may prove to be useful referents when working creatively with his texts. When visualising Lorca's plays, directors and designers need to take into account the role of colour, which is most obvious in descriptions of costumes and the changes in them. An example is shown by the Girlfriend in *When Five Years Pass* who links her decision of dress colour with the desire to appear unattractive and, when absconding with her lover, wishes to only take her brightly coloured dresses to reflect her happiness. Red is symbolically employed by Lorca to symbolise blood and fire; the crucified Christ-like figure in *The Audience* is painted red and red lighting floods the stage in *The Dream of Life* as it burns. White recurs throughout Lorca's plays on classical figures like Helen of Troy and to imply purity through the white outfits of all the dead children in the 'impossible' works. Interestingly, Lorca has been depicted on-screen in white at his execution, a Lorquian symbol appropriated by subsequent dramatists, which is not necessarily a historical fact<sup>43</sup>.

Objects appear in Lorca's plays as symbols of the themes under discussion, such as screens, masks and constantly-changing costumes establishing ideas of transformation and deception. The most prevalent object is the knife, which appears physically or through reference as a dangerous agent of death and sometimes figuratively linked to the image of the Moon – arguably the most widespread element in Lorquian symbolism – which

represents especially both death and fertility<sup>44</sup>, earning Lorca the title: 'Federico - lunar poet'<sup>45</sup>.

### **The 'known' Lorcas**

The plays deemed appropriate for performance during Lorca's lifetime have since been held up against the experimental nature of Lorca's 'impossible' ideas for the theatrical future. Study of certain aspects of these texts can be of assistance directors approaching the 'unknown' and especially unfinished works. Lorca's desire to experiment can be seen, for example, in his first play - *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* – in which the characters are insects. He also includes underlying messages, destined to become recurring Lorquian motifs, such as unconventional love, often linked to his own sexuality, and explored through the insects' lives:

there was an insect who longed to go beyond such love; who was seized by a vision far removed from his normal way of life.<sup>46</sup>

Edwards points to another typically Lorquian theme, also introduced here, which juxtaposes youthful innocence with disenchantment<sup>47</sup>: 'the truth is that Love is Death in disguise.'<sup>48</sup> In spite of its marginality, Edwards hails this play's importance due to its symbolist technique and prologue, which point to Lorca's non-realistic stance and acknowledgment of an audience not easily willing to admit these stylistic changes<sup>49</sup>. Most significantly this play can be seen to display, 'in terms of dramatic style and technique...Lorca's fondness for...[the] integration of different art forms'<sup>50</sup>.

In the prologue to the puppet-play *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife*, the character of the Dramatist addresses the audience directly. Questions of reality – expanded in many of Lorca's subsequent plays – are initiated with the clear establishment of the falseness of

performance through an interruption by an impatient offstage character shouting her desire to enter. This play demonstrates that through using puppetry, Lorca – like his English contemporary Edward Gordon Craig – was not only freed thematically by the form but that 'its inherent characteristics provided [him] with the opportunity of escaping from the strictures of the commercial and the naturalistic theatre'<sup>51</sup>. Consequently, the dramatist could become an *auteur*, able to present their message through working independently of whims of other artists. Also, Lorca's personal preoccupation with creating a 'theatre of social action' can be discerned within this light-hearted yet moral-driven piece which 'ruthlessly exposes, beneath the guise of laughter, particular social attitudes. In particular, Lorca gives expression here to...the theme of social honour and reputation, so deeply ingrained in the Spanish temperament.'<sup>52</sup>

Lorca's most famous play – *Blood Wedding* – is evidence that he had 'mastered the techniques of two of the twentieth century's most significant movements and put them to the service of his own highly individual art.'<sup>53</sup> Within this much-produced play, Lorca's most famous scene – Act 3 Scene 1 – presents his 'impossible' theatre values through a fusion of symbolism and surrealism, including a modern embodiment of the three fates and personification of the Moon and Death, intended to reach to everyone in the audience. As Edwards suggests 'the symbolism of the scene, which universalizes it, extends the range of reference to embrace us all as we, the spectators of the action, witness, as it were, our own deaths and see on stage the projection of our own fears, terrors and nightmares.'<sup>54</sup>

In *The Puppet Play of Don Cristobal* the Director character addresses the audience and flatters their sensibilities and cooperative nature, showing off Lorca's mastery of language<sup>55</sup>.



A Playwright character then highlights the socio-economic distance between audience and artist: 'I'm off to get myself a piece of bread, the tiniest bit of bread the birds have left for me'<sup>56</sup>. The Director censures the Playwright for entering into an exposition of emotional poetry and reminds him who pays his wage, stating plainly that he should 'say what's required, and what the audience knows to be true.'<sup>57</sup> Once again any potential illusion is discarded with the character of Don Cristobal answering calls for his entrance with his response that he'll come when he's 'finished peeing'<sup>58</sup>. Through puppetry then, Lorca appears to have revelled in the 'opportunity for that freedom of expression, spontaneity and vitality which he felt to be the vital ingredients of a living theatre'<sup>59</sup> Later in the play, the drama is interrupted as the Playwright gatecrashes the performance, degrading the conventional theatre audience:

The moon can be a hen...If the director really wanted to...But the owner of the theatre has the characters kept in an iron box and only lets them be seen by ladies...and gentlemen...who belong to a club.<sup>60</sup>

The Director chastises him for this further digression. This play's running conflict motif accompanies the theme of violent love which is widely explored within Lorca's 'impossible' theatre, as Don Cristóbal's children are being born he kills his mother-in-law and plots his wife's murder. Consequently, Lorca's 'politics of theatre' can be seen through the characters' calls for audiences to 'hear upon the stage vulgarities that overwhelm the tedious triviality to which it is condemned'<sup>61</sup>. Through his use of Don Cristóbal – a 'character in whom the pure ancient spirit of the theatre still survives'<sup>62</sup> – Lorca reminds us of his preference for the uneducated audiences of *La Barraca* and not the well-to-do theatre-going city-dwellers.

*Mariana Pineda* was premièred in June 1927, directed by Lorca. The set was designed by Lorca's close friend Salvador Dalí, which implies specific stylistic intentions: this play was not

to be presented with a realistic, natural aesthetic. Dalí and his surreal style were employed to highlight the significance of the playwright's visual decisions:

allusions to the white walls of the room, to the red of the roses, and the dark dress... foreshadow Mariana's paleness, the spilling of her blood and the blackness of despair...<sup>63</sup>

Described as 'the start of a revolution in the theater'<sup>64</sup>, the première of Lorca's play *Yerma* exemplified his intention to change the theatrical landscape. The play, about a barren woman desperate to have a child, openly challenges the strict sexual codes of Catholicism. Lorca was seen to want to revolutionise Spanish audiences' relationship with theatregoing; there was a tumult of attention – both positive and negative – surrounding the play, resulting in chaos at the box office which was welcomed by Lorca, delightedly commenting that it was 'good to see them fighting and arguing like this, as though they were at a rugby match.'<sup>65</sup> Stainton draws parallels between this uproar and that seen in Norway when Henrik Ibsen's ground-breaking *A Doll's House* premièred<sup>66</sup>.

Lorca's final play, *The House of Bernarda Alba* has been described as 'a fitting climax to Lorca's dramatic writing...[in which] unbending social values clash with instinct and passion.'<sup>67</sup> Acknowledging that the play is widely viewed as stylistically conventional and realistic, Stainton cites Lorca's employment of silence – which Huw Aled Lewis correctly states 'speaks volumes'<sup>68</sup> - and exaggerated, puppet-like movements throughout the play as evidence for its place in his theatrical revolution<sup>69</sup>. Again, more is implied, symbolically, by seemingly realistic stage directions, an example is the set which requires 'a whiter-than-white inner room...Thick walls...A great shadowy silence.'<sup>70</sup> However, it is not only the visual which is intended to hold extraordinary significance, Edwards suggests that the entire

'play...[is] a microcosm...[and] the ultimate value of Lorca's...theatre as a whole, lies in the fact that...[it] suggest[s] much more that is actually seen on stage.'<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Unattributed writer, 'Federico García Lorca parla per als obrers Catalans,' *L'Hora* (27<sup>th</sup> Sept. 1935) cited in Stainton, L. *Lorca: A Dream of Life*. (London: Bloomsbury, 1998): 419

<sup>2</sup> Stainton, L. *ibid.*: 390

<sup>3</sup> cited in Stainton, L. *ibid.*: 417

<sup>4</sup> 'El teatro es uno de lo más expresivos y útiles instrumentos para la edificación de un país y el barómetro que marca su grandeza o su descenso.' (My translation) García Lorca, F. *Obras completas, vol. III*, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Aguilar, 1986): 459

<sup>5</sup> Stainton, L. *op.cit.*: 294

<sup>6</sup> Stainton, L. *ibid.*: 313

<sup>7</sup> Stainton, L. *ibid.*: 335

<sup>8</sup> Adams, M. 'Theatre in the Spanish Republic,' *Theatre Arts Monthly*, March 1932: 506-8, in García Lorca, F. *op. cit.*: 507

<sup>9</sup> 'La Barraca para mí es toda mi obra, la obra que me interesa, que me ilusiona más que mi obra literaria...' (My translation) García Lorca, F. *op. cit.*: 594

<sup>10</sup> 'El teatro es una escuela de llanto y de risa y una tribuna libre donde los hombres pueden poner en evidencia morales viejas o equívocas y explicar con ejemplos vivos normas eternas del corazón y del sentimiento del hombre.' (My translation) García Lorca, F. *ibid.*: 459

<sup>11</sup> Stainton, L. *op.cit.*:296.

<sup>12</sup> Stainton, L. *ibid.*:304

<sup>13</sup> 'Un teatro es, ante todo, un buen director.' (My translation) García Lorca, F. *op. cit.*: 533.

<sup>14</sup> Delgado, M.M. *Federico García Lorca (Routledge Modern and Contemporary Dramatists)* (London: Routledge, 2008): 137

<sup>15</sup> Stainton, L. *op.cit.*:393

<sup>16</sup> Stainton, L. *ibid.*:296

<sup>17</sup> Stainton, L. *ibid.*:296

<sup>18</sup> 'Pues no soy, por el momento, más que un director del escena.' (My translation) García Lorca, F. *op. cit.*: 509

<sup>19</sup> Edwards, G. *Dramatists in Perspective: Spanish theatre in the twentieth century*. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1985): 104

<sup>20</sup> Stainton, L. *op.cit.*:308-9

<sup>21</sup> Stainton, L. *op.cit.*: 321-322

<sup>22</sup> Stainton, L. *Ibid.*: 434

<sup>23</sup> Delgado, M.M. *Federico García Lorca (Routledge Modern and Contemporary Dramatists)* (London: Routledge, 2008): 141

<sup>24</sup> Edwards, G. *op.cit.*: 95

<sup>25</sup> Edwards, G. *Ibid.*: 103

<sup>26</sup> Edwards, G. *Ibid.*: 84-5

<sup>27</sup> see Stainton, L. *op.cit.*: 426

<sup>28</sup> Stainton, L. *Ibid.*: 319

<sup>29</sup> see Edwards, G. *op.cit.*: 79

<sup>30</sup> Edwards, G. *Ibid.*: 104

<sup>31</sup> Stainton, L. *op.cit.*: 296

<sup>32</sup> see Edwards, G. *Dramatists in Perspective: Spanish theatre in the twentieth century*. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1985): 109-110 and Stainton, L. *Lorca: A Dream of Life*. (London: Bloomsbury, 1998): 296

<sup>33</sup> 'la centralidad del ritmo' (my translation) Dougherty, D. and Vilches de Frutos, M.F. 'Federico García Lorca como director de escena' in *El teatro en España: entre la tradición y la vanguardia 1918-1939*, M.F. Vilches de Frutos (ed.). Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas: 246

<sup>34</sup> Delgado, M.M. *op.cit.*: 135

<sup>35</sup> see Stainton, L. *op.cit.*: 315

<sup>36</sup> Stainton, L. *Ibid.*: 365-6

- 
- <sup>37</sup> Delgado, M.M. *op.cit.*: 40
- <sup>38</sup> García Lorca, F. *Plays: Two*, trans. Gwynne Edwards (London: Methuen, 1990): 83-4
- <sup>39</sup> García Lorca, F. *Plays: Three*, trans. Gwynne Edwards (London: Methuen, 1994): 100
- <sup>40</sup> Morris, C.B. *García Lorca: Bodas de Sangre, Critical Guides to Spanish Texts* (Valencia/London: Grant & Cutler, 1980): 25
- <sup>41</sup> Edwards, G. *op.cit.*: 106
- <sup>42</sup> Cited in Delgado, M.M. *op.cit.*: 156P137
- <sup>43</sup> see *Death in Granada*, DVD, 2003; *Muerte de una poeta*, DVD, 2006; *Little Ashes*, DVD, 2010
- <sup>44</sup> see Arango, M.A., *Símbolo y simbología en la obra de Federico García Lorca*. (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1995): 58, 195.
- <sup>45</sup> Gibson, I. *Federico García Lorca*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1989): 467
- <sup>46</sup> García Lorca, F. *Plays: Two*: 83
- <sup>47</sup> Edwards, G. *op.cit.*: 79
- <sup>48</sup> García Lorca, F. *op.cit.*: 83
- <sup>49</sup> Edwards, G. *op.cit.*: 76-77
- <sup>50</sup> Edwards, G. *Ibid.*: 79
- <sup>51</sup> Edwards, G. *op.cit.*: 86-7
- <sup>52</sup> Edwards, G. *Ibid.*: 88
- <sup>53</sup> Edwards, G. *Ibid.*: 108
- <sup>54</sup> Edwards, G. *Ibid.*: 107
- <sup>55</sup> See García Lorca, F. *op.cit.*: 67
- <sup>56</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 67
- <sup>57</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 68
- <sup>58</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 69
- <sup>59</sup> Edwards, G. *op.cit.*: 87
- <sup>60</sup> Edwards, G. *op.cit.*: 76
- <sup>61</sup> García Lorca, F. *op.cit.*: 79
- <sup>62</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 79
- <sup>63</sup> Edwards, G. *op.cit.*: 83
- <sup>64</sup> Pacheco, I. 'La vida y el teatro. Las pasiones naturales' in *El Luchador, Alicante* (2 Jan 1935) cited in Stainton, L. *op.cit.*: 400
- <sup>65</sup> Tomás, J. 'García Lorca parla de Yerma' in *La Publicitat, Barcelona* (17 Sept 1935) cited in Stainton, L. *ibid.*: 422
- <sup>66</sup> Stainton, L. *ibid.*: 401
- <sup>67</sup> Edwards, G. *op.cit.*: 119
- <sup>68</sup> Lewis, Hugh Aled. 'The Directorial Function in the Theatre of Federico García Lorca', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 84.6. 2007: 736
- <sup>69</sup> Stainton, L. *op.cit.*: 452-3
- <sup>70</sup> García Lorca, F. *Four Major Plays*, trans. John Edmunds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 119
- <sup>71</sup> Edwards, G. *op.cit.*: 119

**PART TWO: 'THE IMPOSSIBLE THEATRE'**  
*Lorca's 'unperformable' plays on page and stage*

***El publico***

The most well-known of Lorca's 'impossible' plays is *The Audience*, having been widely produced by professional companies and universities wishing to experiment with his revolutionary dramaturgy. Lorca doubted any desire to produce the play and any audience's acceptance of it; Delgado cites his indication of principal characters being horses as part of his rationale for terming the play 'unperformable'<sup>1</sup>. Another practical consideration when staging this 'impossible' play is the requirement for costumes to take on their own life, move and speak.

Concerned with typically Lorquian metatheatrical questions, the main narrative is a riot caused by the discovery that two males playing the title roles in *Romeo and Juliet* are actually in love. Although often interpreted through the lens of Lorca's sexuality, the main argument of the play centres on theatre and its purpose; 'Lorca argues for a stage practice that recognizes its own theatricality'<sup>2</sup>, and blurs levels of reality and theatricality throughout, exemplified by the exchange between bearded characters:

- D'you have a new play to show me?
- What play could be newer than us, in our beards...?<sup>3</sup>

The script establishes important visual aspects of Lorca's dramaturgy. Stage directions describe 'windows [that] are X-ray negatives'<sup>4</sup>, 'a wall of sand...translucent moon'<sup>5</sup> and 'a huge eye and a group of trees'<sup>6</sup> – another Lorquian forest setting which reflects those of *Blood Wedding* and other plays. Such striking visual imagery is reflected in the characters' words exemplified by the description of theatres as 'tombs with spotlights.'<sup>7</sup> Lorca's publicly-expressed opinion that theatre had become deadly and redundant now manifests itself

explicitly in his dramatic output. Indeed, in one scene of this play, the stage becomes a site for death - the Capulets' tomb.

Lorca's aforementioned appropriation of Shakespeare is most evident in *The Audience*. Questions of performance are centred around Shakespeare's characters: 'How did Romeo piss, Mister Director?...did he pretend he was going to hurl himself from a tower, wallowing in the drama of his pain?'<sup>8</sup>. The first scene consists of many similar interrogations and characters display strong emotional responses, one demands the burial of artificial theatre due its inherent cowardice, threatening to commit suicide onstage as 'the only way to bring about true theatre: the theatre beneath the sand.'<sup>9</sup> Delgado describes this as that which 'unsettles audience sensibilities'<sup>10</sup>, is ground-breaking and unconcerned with an audience's delicate tastes. The ensuing dialectic is between this new theatre and the conservatism of the conventional 'theatre of the open air'<sup>11</sup>. In accordance with the intentions of the 'theatre beneath the sand', representation and exposure are interrogated through use of scenographic devices such as masks and a transformative screen. Hidden sexuality and unmasked emotions are exposed as men turn into boys, moustachioed women and whip-wielding fetishists. Any firm sense of truth or reality is discarded: 'characters undergo repeated metamorphoses...[and] the reader cannot be sure where origin ends and disguise begins.'<sup>12</sup> Two conjecturing characters reinforce the theme of change: 'If I changed myself into a turd?' one asks, 'I'd change myself into a fly'<sup>13</sup> the other replies. Despite the abstract nature of these ideas, there is a method in which each transformation discussed links the characters logically. This sense of 'method in madness' in Lorca's surreal constructions is an important factor for those staging these works.

A Lorquian motif particularly present in this play is the violence connected to love and sexuality. Responding to a conflict between two homosexual men, characters cannot decipher whether they are fighting or making love; obsessive and passionate, characters portray their wishes to inhabit, penetrate and consume; and sadomasochistic influences are perceptible through the use of whips and the action of three horses holding aloft 'sticks, and from the ferrules come jets of water...[chanting] We piss on you, we piss on you.'<sup>14</sup> Immediately following this, Lorca's onstage agent – the First Man – hails the opening up of the true 'theatre beneath the sand'. Dramaturgically, this can be seen as a climax in an unconventional dramatic structure, and as the crisis crescendoes it is highlighted by a seemingly empathetic, thunderstorm.

Later, Lorca surpasses previous breaks with convention by presenting onstage 'a red naked man, with a crown of blue thorns.'<sup>15</sup> Within the context of a strictly Catholic country this representation of a distorted Christ-like figure would presumably secure a production's failure. In spite of the character's metatheatrical acknowledgment of the performative set-up, he is still seen to quote the Bible directly. Describing himself as religious, Lorca did not attest to any arguments against the Church, this scene therefore seems to demonstrate his strong desire to subvert tradition and push the boundaries of acceptability. Within *The Audience* itself, Lorca predicts a reaction:

That's why the revolution broke out. The Director opened up the trapdoors, and people could see...poison from fake.<sup>16</sup>

This potential for violent critical response to performance is explored further, when asked to justify his choice of 'a hackneyed tragedy, rather than an original play'<sup>17</sup> the Director's response shows him, like Lorca, struggling to work with the constraints of convention:

In order to show what goes on, every day...using an example that happened only once...had the curtain risen on the original truth, the stalls would have been splattered with blood.<sup>18</sup>

With his directorial response to this play in 1986, Lluís Pasqual ignored Lorca's stage directions and removed his theatre's stage and stalls – reflecting the Director character's insistence that one had to 'destroy the theatre'<sup>19</sup> – and created an empty and expansive scenographic landscape of blue sand covering the floor. However, the space's theatricality was still alluded to with the use of a semi-proscenium arch. Delgado points to the production's intention to comment on both Lorca's resistance to the 1930s theatre and on contemporary theatre and social codes<sup>20</sup> whilst describing how Pasqual only claimed to understand some of the play through preparing it for production whilst admitting that parts still remained enigmatic. This idea of the unknown and unseen permeated Pasqual's approach and by premiering this 'new' text to the Spanish audience 'it simultaneously recognized that revelation is always partial'<sup>21</sup>.

The French première directed by Jorge Lavelli a year later depicted 'a labyrinth that the characters were trapped in'<sup>22</sup>, tapping into the perceptions of theatre expressed in the play and how to engage an audience through such a medium:

All theatre comes from the dank confined places...I made the tunnel to show the shape of a hidden power, once the story had possessed...them, the audience had no choice but to pay attention.<sup>23</sup>

A third notable production was the British première staged by Uitz and Henry Livings in 1988 at in Stratford East. Delgado comments that the production, which was seen as camp and pantomimic, was dismissed by critics<sup>24</sup>, asserting however that it was successful in inspiring further productions of this powerful play 'that probes the role of theatre, its discontents, spectatorship and visibility'<sup>25</sup>.



### ***Así Que Pasen Cinco Años***

Subtitled 'a legend of time', *When Five Years Pass* is a powerful example of Lorca's experimentation with style, structure and subject. Edwards describes how the play 'astonished the group of friends to whom Lorca read it on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1931'<sup>26</sup>, which was arguably unsurprising to the writer considering he often described it as unplayable. Depicting a desperately in-love Young Man who must wait five years for his bride, who in the interim herself falls for someone else, the play shifts through time and produces many unpredictable obstacles with which the protagonist struggles. Surreal in its structure of time and action, the play has been analysed in relation to its subtitle, immersing the audience in discussions of the nature of time and how to survive through it, one character advises, 'one should remember with an eye to the future.'<sup>27</sup> Delgado draws attention to the further links that have been observed to the passage of time in real life: 'That Lorca died five years to the day of completing the play has led to an almost ghoulish fascination with it as a premonition'<sup>28</sup>. Aligning the play's stimuli with the work of the Surrealists of Lorca's time, it is important for potential directors to consider Edwards' charting of strong connections between Lorca's play and the landmark avant-garde film *Un chien andalou* made by his two close friends Luís Buñuel and Salvador Dalí<sup>29</sup>.

Lorca's staging techniques – through detailed stage directions – condition the playing space in line with the dramatic action. Sound-effects of glass breaking and thunder approaching support the characters' exclamations that a significant event is imminent; ideas of an impending revolution, death or some form of tumult can be easily inferred. Similarly, Lorca's script betrays his attempts to direct through the text, he is seen giving notes on casting to future producers, exemplified by his insistence on one part being played by a young man or,

failing that, a woman<sup>30</sup>. Lorca is seen to have clearly envisaged how the characters he created would be presented onstage. Examples of this play's distinctive imagery can be mapped across Lorca's other 'impossible' works; the cat spirit that describes his murder reflects the violin made from a cat scraped with barbed-wire in *The Dream of Life*; the coming-to-life of discarded costumes in *The Audience* paves the way for a mannequin and bridal gown doing the same here; and, once again, Lorca presents his audience with a forest scene, this time containing a physical manifestation of a theatre building onstage. Also, frequent references to knives and similar objects point to Lorca's exploration of inanimate objects and their relation to living beings, the Girlfriend states that 'a knife or a pair of scissors last forever, but this heart of mine has only a moment of life.'<sup>31</sup> Lorca's themes also reoccur, for example, violent love is explored, exemplified by the Maid's boyfriend who 'used to squeeze the rings on [her]...fingers until [her]...hand bled.'<sup>32</sup>

*When Five Years Pass* presents several shifts of register; from a clown addressing the audience directly to other extra-performative moments and influences from the magicians, harlequins and puppets from Lorca's other works. Lorca draws on classical references, creating three card players as the harbingers of death in the style of the Greek Fates, the *Moirae*. In other literature, the *Moirae* are described as spinning the thread of life and appropriating this, the action for the moment of death Lorca ascribes to his characters is a cutting movement in the air with scissors. This is accompanied with directions for the firing of 'a silent arrow'<sup>33</sup> from a gun after the Ace of Hearts (the dying character's last card) is projected onto a bookcase. This type of stage imagery is a clear example of Lorca's experimentation with interweaving styles and conventions as the death at the end of the play, 'occupies both the symbolic sphere...and the terrain of the real.'<sup>34</sup>

Lorca's aforementioned recognition of his play's 'impossibility' did not prevent him being persuaded to assist the preparation of a production in 1936, the year of his death. Research shows that in rehearsal, 'he was keen to avoid sentimentalism, melancholy and effeminacy, deleting lines that didn't work, and pacing the action in divergent ways'<sup>35</sup>. Although this production was never to be staged, the play has attracted a fair amount of attention in both Spanish and English speaking countries since: in 1943 Merce Cunningham directed a ballet adaptation; the play was performed in its original form by the Princetown Players in 1945; and, in 1954, received its world première in Puerto Rico. The professional Spanish première was in 1978 at Teatro Esclava, Madrid. Critics reacted very positively to the play. Lorenzo López Sancho of *ABC* heralded 'the true depth of the great theatrical personality that García Lorca would have become and, probably, his most original and experimental contribution to the theatre.'<sup>36</sup> In order to make the play performable and accessible the director, Miguel Narros, 'avoided the literal interpretation of the stage directions [and] by eliminating...the culture-bound aspects of the play's setting...created a spatial world unfixed within any naturalistic plane'<sup>37</sup> and used oversized costumes to accentuate the comedic and abstract nature of the characters' lives<sup>38</sup>.

A 1986 production directed by Ricardo Iniesta in Seville exemplified how directors and commentators alike have imagined, and in this case explicitly depicted, the Young Man as an onstage representation of Lorca<sup>39</sup>. The première of Gwynne Edwards' English version in Edinburgh in 1989, saw directors Robert Delamere and Maria M. Delgado highlight some of Lorca's dramaturgical influences: the stage was 'a twilight world of...and Dalíesque melting clocks'<sup>40</sup>, music underscored the action and allusions were made to the silent cinema.

Focusing on the stylistic dialectic of the play, the scenography of Joan Ollé's 1998 production 'recognized the play's negotiation of expressionist and surrealist intersections'<sup>41</sup> and Delgado points to other productions which mined both the artistic and personal influence of Dalí and Buñuel on Lorca as stimulus, such as that of Charlotte Westernra at the Arcola, London in 2006 and Michael John Garce in 1998 which made explicit reference to *Un chien andalou*<sup>42</sup>. Garce's concept follows Edwards' indication that although the themes explored in the two impossible plays discussed thus far are Lorca's 'characteristic themes of passion, frustration, passing time and death...a knowledge of Surrealism and of Buñuel's film in particular allowed Lorca to express those themes in an altogether freer and more fluid manner.'<sup>43</sup>

### ***El sueño de la vida***

The first act of Lorca's unfinished play *The Dream of Life* (often published as *Play Without a Title*) is set in a theatre, specifically Madrid's Teatro Español, which Lorca knew well. Throughout this act Lorca uses elements from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, making it the clearest example of his magpie-like nature, through both his adaptive work as director of classic plays and appropriation of other works. Beyond this act nothing remains of the play apart from reports from Lorca's friends that the second part would take place in a mortuary and the third in heaven, 'with Andalusian angels'<sup>44</sup>. The play both incites and depicts revolution and has been seen as 'a perfect example of the Lorquian theatre's intention'<sup>45</sup>. The 'Autor' character talks directly to the audience at the onset, setting out his ideas for the revolution. Most suitably presented as a Director, Lorca had told Margarita Xirgu that this character was to die on the streets during the revolution<sup>46</sup>, itself reflecting the demand for the death of the ground-breaking director in *The Audience* and foreshadowing Lorca's own

death. This is undoubtedly both Lorca's most openly political and metatheatrical piece. C.C. Soufas describes the play as an enhanced version of the other experimental plays with which Lorca was 'embarking on a new phase of his theater'<sup>47</sup>. Lorca intended the play to centre on 'a religious and socio-economic problem'<sup>48</sup> and described the elements of an interactive audience and a revolution which invades the playhouse<sup>49</sup>. Although based around the Asturias revolt mentioned earlier, many commentators, including London, highlight the play's predictive quality, considering 'the fate of its author, the play now stands as a touching prophecy of the Spanish Civil War.'<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Soufas points to the significance of the piece as Lorca's last declaration regarding his intention for theatrical development: 'Everything about it...suggests that he was poised to embrace a new and more authoritative moment for his theater'<sup>51</sup>.

The Director's self-labelled 'sermon' repeats Lorca's plea for truth, reality and a new theatrical order, conducting 'what amounts to a master class on the limits of theatrical authority.'<sup>52</sup> Soufas observes that through the Director's words an attack on the commerciality of theatre is seen, which also acts as an argument for Lorca's career-long experimentation with dramatic style and form.<sup>53</sup> Such experimentation is seen through the discussion of issues Lorca knew would not agree with the sensibilities of his contemporary audience, such as the stating that wood for the coffins of everyone present had already been cut and by drawing reference to 'the cancer lying dormant in a woman's breast'<sup>54</sup>. Lorca seems to have pre-empted a reaction of raising such unspoken topics in *The Audience*, with a character describing those 'who will blench at the word 'cancer' spoken in a certain way'<sup>55</sup>. Showing little care for this extant audience, both the Director figure and by extension the playwright himself see the revolution depicted as a welcome one, calling for the doors to be

thrown open and the attacking working classes permitted entrance. Soufas<sup>56</sup> reiterates that these workers represent the audience Lorca wished to reach after his own upheaval of theatrical conventions.

This play is very much 'an interrogation of the pragmatics of theatre-making'<sup>57</sup>, which has clear links to Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, of which Lorca would have been aware. Following the Director's speech we see various actors, stage-hands and audience members discussing their opinions and ties to the function and functioning of theatre. London<sup>58</sup> states that it is in the juxtaposition of reality and performance practice that humorous aspects of the play are found. Building on *The Audience's* representation onstage of actual theatres and audience members becoming lost in them, characters here convey their fear of painted backdrops, props and lighting states which confuse their perception of reality. The theatre is presented allegorically as a dangerous place with obstacles and dangerous traps behind every curtain. Characters in the former play pre-empt the concerns of the Servant in the latter play, declaring that 'it's vile to get lost in a theatre and you can't find the exit.'<sup>59</sup> Once again blurring the distinction between his life and his dramatic work Lorca expressed similar concerns when speaking publicly, stating that 'half of us wander around completely lost amid drop curtains, painted trees and tin fountains'<sup>60</sup>.

*The Dream of Life* was to remain unperformed until a 1984 performance on Polish television. The Spanish première was produced in 1989. Directed by Lluís Pasqual, the production's destruction of the theatre was enacted so convincingly that the real-life audience could not decipher between fiction and reality and many fled from the collapsing auditorium. Pasqual followed this with a production in France which was used to 'announce a theatrical strategy

that could offer means of interrogating...how theatre might participate in the debates raging through' modern Europe<sup>61</sup>. Responding to the unfinished nature of *The Dream of Life* and the brevity of what exists, directors have most often made attempts to 'finish' it with framing techniques and through combining it into a collage with other works. Examples range from Michael Batz's 1987 production which added new text to highlight the prophetic nature of the play regarding Lorca's death to Luís Miguel Cintra's 2005 version which supplemented the play with extracts from *The Audience*, lectures on the function of theatre and *The Great Theatre of the World* by Calderón<sup>62</sup>. Often, productions, including Pasqual's première and Juan Carlos Corazza's *sueño sin título* in 2007<sup>63</sup>, have interwoven Lorca's script with scenes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The focus of this study now moves from past productions of Lorca's 'impossible' plays to personal reflection upon my own approaches to the challenges of staging *The Dream of Life* following completion of the preparative research discussed thus far.

---

<sup>1</sup> Delgado, M.M. *Federico García Lorca (Routledge Modern and Contemporary Dramatists)* (London: Routledge, 2008): 153

<sup>2</sup> Delgado, M.M. *Ibid.*: 158

<sup>3</sup> García Lorca, F. *Plays: Three*, trans. Gwynne Edwards (London: Methuen, 1994): 65

<sup>4</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 61

<sup>5</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 73

<sup>6</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 99

<sup>7</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 63

<sup>8</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 63

<sup>9</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 64

<sup>10</sup> Delgado, M.M. *op.cit.*: 154

<sup>11</sup> García Lorca, F. *op.cit.*: 62

<sup>12</sup> Delgado, M.M. *op.cit.*: 157

<sup>13</sup> García Lorca, F. *op.cit.*: 68

<sup>14</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 83

<sup>15</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 89

<sup>16</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 93

<sup>17</sup> García Lorca, F. *op.cit.*: 100

<sup>18</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 100

<sup>19</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 101

- 
- <sup>20</sup> Delgado, M.M. *op.cit.*: 160
- <sup>21</sup> Delgado, M.M. *Ibid.*: 163
- <sup>22</sup> Delgado, M.M. *Ibid.*: 163
- <sup>23</sup> García Lorca, F. *op.cit.*: 101
- <sup>24</sup> Delgado, M.M. *op.cit.*: 163-4
- <sup>25</sup> Delgado, M.M. *Ibid.*: 156
- <sup>26</sup> García Lorca, F. *Plays: Two*, trans. Gwynne Edwards (London: Methuen, 1990): xxiv
- <sup>27</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 126
- <sup>28</sup> Delgado, M.M. *Federico García Lorca (Routledge Modern and Contemporary Dramatists)* (London: Routledge, 2008): 141
- <sup>29</sup> See García Lorca, F. *op.cit.*: xxvi
- <sup>30</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 140
- <sup>31</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 149
- <sup>32</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 148
- <sup>33</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 180
- <sup>34</sup> Delgado, M.M. *op.cit.*: 147
- <sup>35</sup> Delgado, M.M. *Ibid.*: 148
- <sup>36</sup> Cited in Edwards, G. *Theatre Beneath the Sand* (London: Marion Boyars, 1980): 94
- <sup>37</sup> Delgado, M.M. *op.cit.*: 149-150
- <sup>38</sup> Documentation viewed on a visit to Spain's Museo Nacional de Teatro, Almagro on 12/07/2011
- <sup>39</sup> Delgado, M.M. *Ibid.*: 141
- <sup>40</sup> Delgado, M.M. *Ibid.*: 152
- <sup>41</sup> Delgado, M.M. *Ibid.*: 151
- <sup>42</sup> Delgado, M.M. *Ibid.*: 152
- <sup>43</sup> Edwards, G. *Dramatists in Perspective: Spanish theatre in the twentieth century*. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1985): 98
- <sup>44</sup> Rodrigo, A. *García Lorca: el amigo de Catalunya* (Barcelona: Edhas, 1984): 290-2 cited in Delgado, M.M. *Federico García Lorca (Routledge Modern and Contemporary Dramatists)* (London: Routledge, 2008): 165
- <sup>45</sup> 'Comedia sin título es un ejemplo cabal del propósito del teatro lorquiano.' (My translation) Vitale, R. *El metateatro en la obra de Federico García Lorca*. (Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 1991): 39
- <sup>46</sup> Stainton, L. *Lorca: A Dream of Life*. (London: Bloomsbury, 1998):440
- <sup>47</sup> Soufas, C.C. *Audience and authority in the modernist theater of Federico García Lorca* (Tuscaloosa; London: University of Alabama, 1996): 141
- <sup>48</sup> 'La verdad de la comedia es un problema religioso y económico-social.' (My translation) García Lorca, F. *Obras completas, vol. III*, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Aguilar, 1986): 674
- <sup>49</sup> 'Un drama social, aún sin título, con intervención del público de la sala y de la calle, donde estalla una revolución y asaltan el teatro....' (My translation) García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 679
- <sup>50</sup> García Lorca, F. *The Unknown Federico García Lorca*, ed. and trans. John London (London: Atlas Press, 1996): 14-15
- <sup>51</sup> Soufas, C.C. *op.cit.*: 149
- <sup>52</sup> Soufas, C.C. *Ibid.*: 143
- <sup>53</sup> Soufas, C.C. *Ibid.*: 147
- <sup>54</sup> García Lorca, F. *Plays: Three*, trans. Gwynne Edwards (London: Methuen, 1994): 107
- <sup>55</sup> García Lorca, F. *Ibid.*: 64
- <sup>56</sup> Soufas, C.C. *op.cit.*: 149
- <sup>57</sup> Delgado, M.M. *op.cit.*: 167
- <sup>58</sup> García Lorca, F. *The Unknown FGL.*: 11
- <sup>59</sup> García Lorca, F. *Plays: Three*: 94
- <sup>60</sup> Stainton, L. *Lorca: A Dream of Life*. (London: Bloomsbury, 1998): 298
- <sup>61</sup> Delgado, M.M. *op.cit.*: 168
- <sup>62</sup> see Delgado, M.M. *Ibid.*: 168-9
- <sup>63</sup> see <http://www.laiaalemany.com/teatro.html>



**PART THREE: 'AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM'**  
*Directing (and finishing) 'The Dream of Life'*

Whilst preparing for initial exploratory workshops and rehearsals with graduates from Birmingham School of Acting for my dissertational production (*An Impossible Dream of Life* - performed in June 2011), the opinions of directors regarding Lorca proved interesting and useful, first and foremost from Lluís Pasqual – ‘the most important contemporary director of García Lorca’s theatre’<sup>1</sup> – who states that ‘there is no essential García Lorca, no infallible ideological position, no universal truth to be plucked from his diverse body of work.’<sup>2</sup> Others highlighted Lorca’s openness, within which directors can explore their own vision, as well as elements already explored such as the importance of the ethos of *La Barraca* and its ideals for a theatre for all; the significance of Lorca’s own directing work; and his intensely theatrical and extremely visual nature<sup>3</sup>. Alongside these reflections, detailed analysis of Lorca’s plays, fragments and experimental drafts ‘testify to the continuing intensity of Lorca’s dramatic imagination.’<sup>4</sup> His ironic view of purgatory seen in *Shadows* was vastly influential and became a major part of my piece. Other texts such as *Buster Keaton Takes A Walk* and *Chimera* portray Lorca’s fusion of theatrical know-how, dalliance with surrealism and the value he gave to visual elements, including use of cinematic references. Also, *Trip to the Moon*, his only screenplay, highlights his experimentation with intermediality and, as Stainton describes, the liberation Lorca felt when interweaving the norms of different media, endeavouring ‘to think of literature in terms of other media...and to write in one genre in terms of another, a way of challenging as well as reshaping.’<sup>5</sup> An overview of Lorca’s work suggests the huge implication his ‘unperformable’ experimentation could have had on theatre history, had his career not ended so prematurely. Therefore my intention, perhaps somewhat impossibly, was to present a wide view of his relatively unknown area of his work to an audience, with many ideas from numerous, diverse origins being presented within the

short piece. Further development and a less-hasty journey through Lorca's 'impossible' theatre, would mean certain sections could gain more clarity or depth.

A key challenge for my approach centred on the need to deal with Lorca's idiosyncratic style discussed earlier. In *The Dream of Life*, unlike other 'impossible' works, realism is the overriding style, however, with the desire to experiment with and represent Lorca's 'impossible' dramaturgy, room was to be required for diverse stylistic elements. It proved challenging to convey the artistic freedom Lorca offers within the comparably realistic set-up of the play (after all, this was the actual revolution he wanted realised onstage). To tackle this I directed segments of text using expressionistic movement and juxtaposition of images such as a coffee-shop worker becoming a vessel through which a story was interpreted through physical choreography. This break with the style and expectation of the realistic opening seems to have been effective in alerting the audience, and 'warming them up', to further experimentation to come.

A chief question was how to create the world of Lorca's play. Delgado points to how this play 'constructs a space where chaos threatens'<sup>6</sup>, accordingly I aimed to design a destroyable and increasingly muddled scenography. With C.B. Morris' indication to 'Lorca's eye for simple but telling detail'<sup>7</sup> in mind, the design was carefully created with great attention given to the symbolic significance Lorca ascribed to colour, exemplified by the marked contrast between the Actress character's light, pastel attire as Titania and her blood-red dress for Lady Macbeth. *The Dream of Life* requires a traditional view of theatre to exist and be destroyed whilst, in my piece, three distinct settings needed to be shown. This was to be realised within fairly strict production limitations and with the directorial desire to create the kind of

fluidity characteristic of Lorca's own work. Ultimately this process became one of refining designs whilst firmly holding onto the quintessence of the 'world of the play'. In concrete terms, scenic elements needed to be regularly simplified and reduced through the process. However, in performance this resulted, for me, in symbols becoming starker and more effective.

As discussed, music and an accompanying fluidity of action were important to Lorca. Accordingly, a great deal of consideration led to the selection and manipulation of sound effects and music, which were rehearsed with from an early stage, aiming to marry them to the action seamlessly. With the choice of music tracks I wanted to create a muddled frame of reference drawing on different periods, languages, instruments and styles, with the hope of creating a shifting and unsteady feel to the play's setting. It was with deliberate allusions to the ancient, Renaissance, early twentieth century, 2011 and a non-temporal limbo (a vision of each individual's future beyond death) that the performance embraced juxtaposition and perceivably disjointed frames of reference; the time of this piece was intentionally neither the 1930s or today. In particular, the performance gave me the opportunity to develop my inclusion of references to today, momentarily shifting the register inextricably to 2011. A character's insinuation to the Twitter scandal involving a high-profile football star – which was a current news story – exemplified how we experimented with this aspect. This provoked welcome response in the form of laughter whilst seemingly achieving a reminder to those present that they were not simply passive spectators who do not share common frames of reference with those onstage. Comedy was highlighted in our rehearsals as an important factor to be managed effectively, especially with the wandering shadows in heaven and in the ironic commentaries of the Director. As a

company, we wanted to ensure the audience engaged with Lorca's humour without the strangeness of onstage events and ideas provoking a detrimental alienation or distancing effect through potential misunderstanding or confusion. As has been seen in Part 2, previous productions of Lorca's 'impossible' works have been coolly received by critics and audiences when seen to lean towards the camp or ridiculous in dealing with the play's inherent humour. Any disadvantageous comedic effect seemed to be avoided by clearly taking the play seriously, whilst pinpointing moments which could be played as a comic aside or 'wink to the audience'.

If, in *The Dream of Life*, the character of the 'Autor' represents Lorca onstage, who, as we know, was both playwright and director, this character often contradicts himself through expressing both the words and opinions of the two sides of Lorca's practice. This reflects the image of Lorca 'grappling with the distinct demands of the two roles, as he tries to define their boundaries and responsibilities.'<sup>8</sup> Consequently, confusion can exist as a result of lines in which the 'Autor' refers to the writer in the third person but is elsewhere presented himself as that character. Consequently, I cast two actors as two separate parts – a revolutionary Director and an idealist Playwright who share a common politics but differ in their approaches to how to realise them – splitting the lines of the original figure to the most suitable new character. This created an interesting partnership onstage and in rehearsal much time was taken up experimenting with this dichotomy in the light of Lorca's own practice. The ambiguity of this role (as one character, as performed by one actor) could reflect historically the lack of clearly defined positions in theatrical production at the time of writing. Perhaps the nature of this text as a draft is also a consideration: the question repeats – where would Lorca have gone with this? The decision to split the character did

result in other opportunities being somewhat excluded; firstly, the chance to present a truer 'Lorca' onstage (although both Spanish and English-speaking audiences are widely unaware of his directorial work and much more familiar with the poet/playwright) and, secondly, the chance to creatively experiment with just one actor interpreting the 'metaphysical clash'<sup>9</sup> between inventor and interpreter of drama and the possibility of staging something of the dichotomy of Lorca's own work. Another key character-based decision was to explore the symbol of the Moon in Lorca's dramaturgy and the different facets of its characters. In *The Audience*, it is described as giving 'little torches to worms to light their way into cherries; [and]...carries masks of meningitis into bedrooms'<sup>10</sup>, and elsewhere Lorca presents it as a bringer of justice, a performer, a young boy trying to assert himself and akin to a knife thirsty for blood. The result in *An Impossible Dream of Life* was an enigmatic character that intermittently engaged with humans, became invisible and alone, philosophised and displayed conversely antagonistic and caring qualities.

Sarah Wright points to Lorca's 'commitment to provocation of the audience'<sup>11</sup> within his 'impossible' works. In his own time this was based on the fact that he 'denounced Spanish theatre as a theatre 'made by and for pigs''<sup>12</sup>. Two such figures exist in *The Dream of Life* and rehearsals started with these characters situated amongst the real audience. However, a major discovery came when moving them to an onstage position and clearly marking them as 'other' to the real audience, we were now able to distinctly comment on the context of the 1930s theatre with today's audience's. Lorca clearly wanted to free the theatre from its constraints and to transform its main relationship: 'Theatre must demand of the audience and not the audience of theatre.'<sup>13</sup> We aimed to do this by presenting our audience with a vast array of juxtaposed and disparate elements from Lorca's unknown works, challenging

them to engage rather than passively appreciate the performance event. To this end, the Director and Playwright, making distinction between their addressees, pointed several moments to 'today's audience'; these became described in rehearsal as 'the DVD commentary' – where a break from the moment onstage would occur as a character would talk to the real audience in their own time (2011) and space (the auditorium). Upon reflection, with more time and further work, this aspect of an audience dichotomy would be able to be clarified. It would be beneficial to include more moments when the 2011 audience knew it was being addressed on its own, or that comment was solely on the 1930s audience and so on.

The aforementioned major structural challenge of this play is its incompleteness and directors are rarely able to stage a piece of this brevity without packaging it and lengthening its runtime. Through research documented in summary throughout this study, coupled with my own directorial vision for the new piece, I edited together relevant, concordant and attractive extracts of text from elsewhere in Lorca's work. Like other directors, I used part of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to establish the theatrical world. My piece began with the Theseus and Hippolyta's opening dialogue, with them being interrupted by the agitated and sermonizing Director. Acts two and three (set, as Lorca wanted, in a mortuary and in heaven) were constructed from extracts from other 'impossible' plays, *Blood Wedding* and his poem *Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías*. The inclusion of this non-dramatic text stemmed from the significance its high-profile, Spanish, bisexual subject had for Lorca:

Federico was fascinated by him both because he shattered the normal expectations held of...the bullfighter, and because his sexuality challenged the traditional schism between male and female forms of sexuality.<sup>14</sup>

Taking literally Lorca's famous quotation - 'Theatre is poetry that rises up from the page and becomes human'<sup>15</sup> - the company explored how this poem could be performed as dramatic text. The resulting work became scenes between three morticians, echoing the major theme of death which runs through all Lorquian work and reflects his preoccupation with his own death. Lorca's religion also proved important and, in the third act, the company created a vision of heaven created from his writings. It became a cloudy limbo where figures resembling Lorca's overall-clad *La Barraca* discussed everything from the mundane to reincarnation, ending with Lorca's ideology for a theatre - and society - of the future.

Overall the structuring of *An Impossible Dream of Life* seemed effective in creating a 'whole'. This was possibly due to my approach to the piece, taking - as Lorca did - an auteurist control: I was solely responsible for selecting and editing the text, casting, directing and designing the production. Just as Lorca would cut lines from classic plays to avoid the out-moded, I found it necessary in rehearsal to revisit and re-translate clumsy words or sentences - perhaps a result of a non-theatrical translator's work - and to rewrite and modernise old-fashioned phrasing and vocabulary to ensure the play could live in the present. Therefore, like Lorca, and his contemporary Brecht, by playing many parts on the production team, I aimed to maintain one strong, overall artistic vision for shaping the material.

Returning to the question of how Lorca has been a referent for those wishing to experiment theatrically and the sense of his potential for influence on modern theatre history, Delgado points to how 'the concerns and techniques of...[his] plays are picked up in the site specific and environmental theatre of the 1960s and 1970s...reconfiguring dramatic focus around the

place of performance'<sup>16</sup> and Lorca's desire to perform even against political constraint is seen to anticipate the cultural activity forced underground later in the twentieth century, like Pavel Kohout's Living-Room Theatre in the former Czechoslovakia, due to its apparent political affiliation. In the attempting to leave the audience with a sense of Lorca's prophetic and influential nature, we created our own symbolic tribute, with inspiration for the resulting end-sequence coming from Lorca's own life and his last words to friends:

These fields are going to be strewn with corpses...There's a  
thunderstorm brewing and I'm going home.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Smith, P.J. *The Theatre of García Lorca: Text, Performance, Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 118

<sup>2</sup> Delgado, M.M. *'Other' Spanish Theatres: Erasure and inscription on the twentieth-century Spanish stage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003): 221

<sup>3</sup> Doggart, S. and Thompson, M. (eds.) *Fire, Blood and the Alphabet: One Hundred Years of Lorca*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010): 207-222

<sup>4</sup> Soufas, C.C. *Audience and authority in the modernist theater of Federico García Lorca* (Tuscaloosa; London: University of Alabama, 1996): 128

<sup>5</sup> Stainton, L. *Lorca: A Dream of Life*. (London: Bloomsbury, 1998): 450

<sup>6</sup> Delgado, M.M. *op.cit.*: 214

<sup>7</sup> Morris, C.B. *García Lorca: Bodas de Sangre, Critical Guides to Spanish Texts* (Valencia/London: Grant & Cutler, 1980): 58

<sup>8</sup> Lewis, H. A. 'The Directorial Function in the Theatre of Federico García Lorca', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 84.6. 2007: 724

<sup>9</sup> Lewis, H. A. *ibid.*: 732

<sup>10</sup> García Lorca, F. *Plays: Three*, trans. Gwynne Edwards (London: Methuen, 1994): 79

<sup>11</sup> Wright, S. *The Trickster-Function in the Theatre of García Lorca*. (London: Tamesis, 2000): 34

<sup>12</sup> Delgado, M.M. *Federico García Lorca (Routledge Modern and Contemporary Dramatists)* (London: Routledge, 2008): 133

<sup>13</sup> 'El teatro se debe imponer al público y no el público al teatro.' (my translation) García Lorca, F. *Obras completas, vol. III*, 2nd edition. ed. Arturo del Hoyo (Madrid: Aguilar, 1986): 460

<sup>14</sup> Johnston, D. *Federico García Lorca*. (Bath: Absolute Press, 1998): 117

<sup>15</sup> 'El teatro es la poesía que se levanta del libro y se hace humana.' (my translation) García Lorca, F. *op.cit.*: 673

<sup>16</sup> Delgado, M.M. *op.cit.*: 138-9

<sup>17</sup> Stainton, L. *op.cit.*: 458



## CONCLUSION

Lorca's enigmatic and disjointed dramaturgy has proved a source of inspiration for further creativity by practitioners and this study has aimed to draw together the elements that are most relevant to theatre-makers approaching his 'impossible' plays. Lorca has been adapted, quoted, misquoted and performed in numerous media, languages and styles; however, I propose, Lorca remains, through his aspirations for theatre, society and himself which have engendered unending curiosity and fan-like devotion.

Biographical and career-based research provides important findings. Lorca resisted being seen as political, but he was inextricably linked to those on the Left of Spanish politics considering the theatrical revolution he intended to incite wanted 'ordinary people' to re-enter and re-possess the theatre. Lorca envisaged a 'theatre of social action'<sup>1</sup> with a passion for both the art of theatre-making and the skill of engaging unconventional audiences. These may prove crucial considerations for directors embarking on their own productions of his plays. Lorca's own directing work is also a vital means of gaining insight: he was 'hands-on' and tireless in rehearsals; his performances were seen as visionary, always presenting a clear concept; and, he championed the bringing together of all production elements, favouring neither text nor character over scenography and musicality.

Attempting to decipher Lorca's style highlights key concerns for engaging with his texts. Unwilling to subscribe to one school of artistic style, Lorca experimented with the real, symbolic and surreal, giving utmost importance to making theatre, his preferred art form, meaningful. In particular, when staging revivals of classical plays he won praise for his dynamic, inventive approach which resisted the inaccessible conventions of the time and

'could result, in the hands of a good director, in a show of great modernity.'<sup>2</sup> Examples of such modernity, seemingly commonplace to current analysts but groundbreaking in the context of 1930s Spain, included use of modern dress for classics, an acting physicality which veered away from realism and a metatheatrical self-reflexivity onstage. Also Lorca was committed to the rhythm, pace and timing of performances. Of consequence for directors approaching him today, Lorca - as playwright - can be seen to be directing (and, as seen, even casting) through stage directions and establishing key objects and images – such as the knife and ever-present moon – in the creation of the worlds of his plays.

Originality is undoubtedly the most recurrent aspect for which Lorca was hailed. However original, Lorca is seen to be clearly influenced by ideas that had gone before as well as those of his contemporaries – Spanish colleagues he knew and European dramatists reached him in Spain. Furthermore, foreseeing the collage-based form of performance which was to develop in future years, he appropriated and re-imagined the works of others whilst experimenting with intermediality.

Through analysis of Lorca's 'known' works, his key motivations and intentions can be perceived and subsequently applied to potential, future productions. Extremely significant is the freedom enjoyed by Lorca when writing for puppets, which was an effective revolt against the limiting constraints of his contemporary theatre. An overview of better-known Lorcas has provided a strong foundation for close analysis of the 'impossible' plays themselves. The impossibility of these plays, exemplified by inanimate objects living alongside 'real' beings, has been seen to excite and continually fascinate Lorca. He used these plays to further explore his favourite themes, such as the violence and secrecy of love, and they 'signal an acknowledgement of the breathing, kinetic relationship between the

moving living body and its performance environment'<sup>3</sup>. Lorca was, like his own characters, trying to open up the 'theatre beneath the sand' and his motives, witnessed through research into his life and works and watching his plays, have been seen to inspire many subsequent productions. Lorca's own practice highlighted how he was willing to concede cuts and edits where he perceived ineffective conveyance of meaning. This supports an argument for directorial concepts, like Miguel Narros', to remove the few and seemingly insignificant, culture-specific elements of the plays in order to reach a wider, international audience – one of Lorca's objectives for his new theatre.

Delgado insightfully describes how 'rather than tell stories, all three [impossible plays] prioritize the theatrical experience itself with its inherent reliance on audience reciprocity and reflection.'<sup>4</sup> As arguably the strongest example, and most political, of these, Lorca's last statement on his intended creative trajectory, *The Dream of Life*, is central to those wishing to engage with his 'impossible' theatre. In my own approach to directing this play certain aspects became hugely significant such as humour and the 'tightrope walk' between embracing the comedic elements and appearing ridiculous; the blurring of reality and theatricality with the concomitant desire to engage today's audience whilst also commenting on the socio-political context of Lorca's time; and the importance of conveying the overriding message of a Lorca's theatrical revolution.

Research into past productions and their directors attested to the malleability of Lorca's theatre and vastness of possibilities therein. Just as 'the speculative remains a powerful tool in Lorca scholarship'<sup>5</sup> the non-existence of a definitive Lorquian theatrical style results in modern theatre-makers being able to attempt to finish his work whilst presenting their own distinct ideas. Consideration of Lorca's experimental and often fragmentary texts and their

own challenges for onstage realisation assisted towards the creation of my final piece. Examples included how his dialogue between two snails provided my actors with crucial insights to the abstract nature of some of the scenarios they were asked to enact.

Key directorial practices such as casting decisions and a central control over the editing and adapting of the different texts used allowed for experimentation with theories of Lorca's 'impossible' theatre and specifically the representation of Lorca – or his ideals – onstage, as both playwright and director.

My performance – like many other past Lorquian productions – faced and attempted to answer the conflicting challenges of the 'impossible' plays' content, styles and dramaturgical structures. I believe that the outcome proved that these factors should not demotivate Lorca disciples from working on his plays as nothing is certain or clear in the quest for where Lorca's development could have taken his inspirationally 'impossible' theatre; typically enigmatic, but of value to today's theatre-makers, Lorca's opinions resound:

I believe there is no old theatre or new theatre, only good theatre and bad theatre.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Stainton, L. Stainton, L. *Lorca: A Dream of Life*. (London: Bloomsbury, 1998): 406-7

<sup>2</sup> 'Para García Lorca el teatro clásico podría resultar, en manos de un buen director, un espectáculo de gran modernidad.' (My translation) Dougherty, D. and Vilches de Frutos, M.F. 'Federico García Lorca como director de escena' in *El teatro en España: entre la tradición y la vanguardia 1918-1939*, M.F. Vilches de Frutos (ed.). Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas: 245

<sup>3</sup> Delgado, M.M. *Federico García Lorca (Routledge Modern and Contemporary Dramatists)* (London: Routledge, 2008): 138

<sup>4</sup> Delgado, M.M. *ibid.*: 139

<sup>5</sup> Delgado, M.M. *ibid.*: 171

<sup>6</sup> 'Creo que no hay...ni teatro viejo ni teatro nuevo, sino teatro bueno y teatro malo.' (my translation) *Obras completas, vol. III*, 2nd ed. ed. Arturo del Hoyo (Madrid: Aguilar, 1986): 627

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRIMARY:

García Lorca, F., *El público; y Comedia sin título: dos obras póstumas*, ed. Rafael Martínez Nadal.

Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1978.

- *Selected Letters*, ed. and trans. David Gershtator. London: Marion Boyars, 1984.
- *Obras completas, vol. III*, 2nd edition. ed. Arturo del Hoyo. Madrid: Aguilar, 1986.
- *Plays: One*, trans. Gwynne Edwards. London: Methuen, 1987.
- *Plays: Two*, trans. Gwynne Edwards. London: Methuen, 1990.
- *Plays: Three*, trans. Gwynne Edwards. London: Methuen, 1994.
- *Obras completas, vols. II & VI*, ed. Miguel García-Posada. Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg/Cículo de Lectores, 1994.
- *The Unknown Federico García Lorca*, ed. and trans. John London. London: Atlas Press, 1996.
- *Four Major Plays*, trans. John Edmunds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- *Impossible Theater*, ed. and trans. Caridad Svich. Hanover: Smith & Kraus, 2000.
- *El público; El sueño de la vida*, ed. Antonio Monegal. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2000.

### SECONDARY:

Arango, M.A., *Símbolo y simbología en la obra de Federico García Lorca*. Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1995.

Delgado, M.M. *'Other' Spanish Theatres: Erasure and inscription on the twentieth-century Spanish stage*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.

- *Federico García Lorca. Routledge Modern and Contemporary Dramatists*. London: Routledge, 2008.

Doggart, S. and Thompson, M. (eds.) *Fire, Blood and the Alphabet: One Hundred Years of Lorca*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010.

Dougherty, Dru and Vilches de Frutos, María Francisca. 'Federico García Lorca como director de escena' in *El teatro en España: entre la tradición y la vanguardia 1918-1939*, M.F. Vilches de Frutos (ed.). Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas: 241-251.

- Edwards, G. *Lorca: The Theatre Beneath the Sand*. London: Marion Boyars, 1980.
- *Dramatists in Perspective: Spanish theatre in the twentieth century*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1985.
  - *Lorca: Living in the Theatre*. London: Peter Owen, 2003.
- Gibson, I. *Federico García Lorca: A Life*. London: Faber and Faber, 1989.
- Gómez Torres, A.M. *Experimentación y teoría en el teatro de Federico García Lorca*. Málaga: Editorial Arguval, 1995.
- Guerrero Ruíz, P. *Federico García Lorca en el espejo del tiempo*. Alicante: CAM & Aguaclara, 1998) [Kindle Edition].
- Johnston, D. *Federico García Lorca*. Bath: Absolute Press, 1998.
- Morris, C.B. *García Lorca: Bodas de Sangre, Critical Guides to Spanish Texts*. Valencia/London: Grant & Cutler, 1980.
- 'Spanish Writers and Surrealism: Federico García Lorca' in *Surrealism and Spain, 1920-1936*, C.B. Morris. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972: 48-52.
- Silver, Philip W. 'El metateatro de Federico García Lorca' in *La casa de Anteo: ensayos de poetica hispana*, eds. Antonio Machado and Claudio Rodríguez. Madrid: Taurus, 1985: 157-190.
- Smith, P.J. *The Theatre of García Lorca: Text, Performance, Psychoanalysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Soufas, C.C. *Audience and authority in the modernist theater of Federico García Lorca*. Tuscaloosa; London: University of Alabama, 1996.
- Stainton, L. *Lorca: A Dream of Life*. London: Bloomsbury, 1998.
- Vitale, R. *El metateatro en la obra de Federico García Lorca*. Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 1991.
- Wright, S. *The Trickster-Function in the Theatre of García Lorca*. London: Tamesis, 2000.

#### **ARTICLES:**

- Banús Irusta, Enrique. 'La generación del 27 y Federico García Lorca', *Actas del XII Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas IX*. 1995: 153-170.
- Boyle, Catherine. 'A reflection on Crisis and Meaning in Federico García Lorca's Dramatic Languages', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 83.1. 2006: 161-72.
- Colecchia, Francesca. 'The "prólogo" in the Theater of Federico García Lorca: Towards the Articulation of a Philosophy of Theater' *Hispania*, Vol.69, No.4. 1986: 791-796.

- Elman, Linda L. 'Linking Life and Lyric: The Federico García Lorca Course' *Hispania*, Vol.87, No.1. 2004: 143-149.
- Gómez Lance, Betty Rita. 'Muerte y Vida en el Drama de Federico García Lorca', *Hispania*, Vol. 43, No.3. 1960: 376-377.
- Harrette, María Estela. 'Comedia sin título: análisis de una revolución teatral', *Actas del XII Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas XII*. 1995: 180-185.
- Jerez-Farrán, Carlos. 'García Lorca, el espectáculo de la inversión sexual y la reconstitución del yo', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 83:5. 2006: 669-693.
- Lewis, Hugh Aled. 'The Directorial Function in the Theatre of Federico García Lorca', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 84.6. 2007: 721-36.
- Sánchez, José Antonio. 'The impossible theatre': The Spanish stage at the time of the avant-garde', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 7:2. 1998: 7-30.
- Taylor, Leticia S. 'Federico García Lorca', *Hispania*, Vol.33, No.1. 1990: 33-36.

**WEBSITES:**

<http://www.laiaalemany.com/teatro.html> [Accessed 14/05/2011, 17:11].

**DVDS:**

*Death in Granada*, DVD, 105 minutes, Columbia, Germany, 2003.

*Muerte de una poeta*, DVD, 118 minutes, Divisa Red, Spain, 2006.

*Little Ashes*, DVD, 107 minutes, Kaleidoscope Entertainment, UK, 2010.

**VISITS:**

Museo Nacional de Teatro, Almagro, Castilla-La Mancha, Spain [Visited 12/07/2011].