



Duende de Lorca & “Journeys”

For over 20 years after his death, Lorca's name was taboo and his work was banned in Spain under Franco's rule. In “Journeys” workshops, participants are offered an opportunity to discuss taboo issues that can lead to loneliness and despair, such that Lorca often felt living in a society where homosexuality was considered abhorrent. Teatro Milagro’s “Journeys” workshops use a combination of popular education and role-playing techniques to engage participants as “actors” in a dialog that provokes self-reflection. With the addition of poetry, music and dance, inspired by Lorca’s work, the “Journeys” workshops create a relaxed and fun environment in which to address sensitive issues, discover new solutions to interpersonal concerns and celebrate “individuality”.



Duende de Lorca Background

Because Federico García Lorca's mother, Vicenta, was in poor health when Lorca was born, he was sent to a wet nurse—a fact to which some attributed his personal health problems. The year was 1898. Lorca’s left leg did not develop fully as an infant; therefore he learned to walk late and lived with what he called “a clumsy walk” as a boy. His consequent lack of ability in sports is what led to his enthusiasm for more artistic endeavors of singing and storytelling. He quickly became extremely popular in the village of Fuente Vaqueros and was often the invited guest in other children's homes because of his gregarious and entertaining nature.

As a young man Lorca wanted very much to study music and travel to Paris, but his parents would never support such a plan. When his music teacher died tragically, Lorca was deeply affected and turned his artistic energy to poetry. He joined a group of writers, visual artists and musicians that met at the Cafe Alameda Granada, later to be nicknamed “El Rinconcillo” (the little corner) where they would discuss their ideas and share their creative works. In the back of the cafe, behind the little stage where musicians played, the collaborators met nightly until many of them moved to Madrid and other parts abroad.



One of the members of this group was Melchor Fernandez Almagro, a distinguished writer of important historical topics. He would become Lorca's principal supporter, and he was often the first person that Lorca turned to for literary advice and guidance. After Melchor moved to Madrid, the two would write to each other frequently.

In 1917 Lorca was beginning to make a name for himself as a poet. Due to his unhappy and unsuccessful romantic attempts with the cold Maria Lisa Gonzalez, he had already tasted the bitter pill of unrequited love, and this of course furthered his work as a poet. He feared he would never again find love, feeling unattractive to women, and he was becoming painfully aware that he was “different”. Immersing himself in his work, Federico petitioned his father to foot the bill for the printing of his first book. While

his father was uncertain at first, he was soon convinced by many professionals including Andrew Segovia, and he paid for the printing of Lanscapes and Impressions. "We liked it," said Segovia. "we spoke to Don Federico at once and told him that in our view, young Federico had a great talent as a writer and a splendid future." Unfortunately, the copies did not sell well and sat for years in Don Federico's attic.

In 1919, when Federico was 21, his parents finally agreed to let him move to Madrid and to pay for his legal studies at La Residencia de Estudiantes, an experimental hostel intended to bring intellectuals from different areas of study from humanities and sciences. Noted guests such as H.G. Wells, Albert Einstein and Marie Curie would present lectures, and La Residencia also had a small printing press to publish works of the resident and guest authors.

Lorca's friends from El Riconcillo were happy to find him in Madrid, and they picked up where they left off at one of Madrid's hot spots for artists and writers. It was there at "The Arts Club" where he would meet Salvador Dali and filmmaker, Luis Buñuel, who became his fast friends. They would spend the summers together, along with Salvador's sister Ana Maria, and would remain close until Salvador moved to Paris.



Lorca also met Gregorio Martinez Sierra, director of Teatro Eslava, the most innovative theatre of its time, and Catalina Barcena, Sierra's mistress and leading lady. They begged for a private reading of Lorca's work and were delighted by his poem about a butterfly and a cockroach, which left Catalina in tears. They insisted on backing the project of transforming the poem into a play. Though uneasy about the project, Lorca was convinced by Melchor to accept, and the show was produced. From the first lines of the script, boos, catcalls, foot stomping and insults deafened the hall. Only La Argentinita's dance, who played the injured butterfly, was remembered as the noise from the crowd deafened the critics' ability to comment on the work. Later, Lorca would say that *Mariana Pineda* was his first play.

In the summer of 1921 Federico took up the study of Flamenco music and picked it up very quickly. His musician friend Manuel de Falla was also very fascinated with the folk music and they spent the summer investigating the caves of the Sacromonte and beginning to work together on the

Tragicomedy of Don Cristobal and Señorita Rosita. As the summer passed and the fall began, Lorca became more confident he could maintain a career in the literary arts and postponed his return to the university.

In 1922, working with Manuel de Falla, they created a lecture and concert of *Cante Jondo* music and poetry and in the process Lorca realized that he possessed the communicative power known as *duende* that the Gypsies used to express their deepest inner feelings. They went on to stage a competition which brought artists from far and wide to Granada. With his established success of Andalusian traditions in mind, Lorca set out to finish the *Tragicomedy of Don Cristobal and Señorita Rosita*. Feeling more confident in the winter of 1923, he took his final exams and finished his law degree, and his proud parents agreed to fund his return to Madrid.

Meeting him there, Gregorio Marinez Sierra offered a second chance to Lorca, who showed him the scripts of *The Shoemakers Prodigious Wife*, which would turn out to be his most successful play, and *Mariana Pineda*.



While Sierra agreed to produce *The Shoemakers Prodigious Wife*, Mariana Pineda's political implications made him uncomfortable, and Lorca went in search of another producer. The actress Margarita Xirgu expressed interest, but then changed her mind after reading the script.

Meanwhile Lorca had cultivated a deep relationship with a young sculptor named Emilio Aladren Perojo. Eight years younger than Lorca, Perojo was the son of a wealthy military officer from Saragossa. The young man was very handsome, with jet-black hair and fine features, and most of Lorca's friends had developed a strong dislike for him, both as an artist and as a person. They felt that his influence over the Lorca was highly detrimental. Nevertheless, Lorca reveled in showing Perojo off at parties as "one of Spain's promising new talents", which provoked considerable jealousy among his other friends. "The sculptor was my great love," he once confided, "He was the reason why I wanted to get away from Spain, to escape ... He was the cause of everything."



In 1927 Margarita Xirgu finally agreed to produce *Mariana Pineda* and it seemed that Lorca's fortunes were finally changing. Mariana was produced in Barcelona and Madrid to enthusiastic crowds, and so begins the story of *Duende de Lorca* ...

DUENDE DE LORCA

An Original, Bilingual Teatro Milagro Production
Written by Dañel Malán • Directed by Matt Zrebski

Federico García Lorca is celebrated the world over for his passionate, avant-garde poetry, music and plays. Yet at the age of 27, he was just another struggling artist living with his parents, writing puppet plays that were laughed off the stage by critics. His need for freedom fueled his desire to succeed, and his travels through New York and Cuba quickly became a quest for cultural integration and acceptance. In the Americas, Lorca shone like a mad and fiery diamond, fusing his *cante jondo* with Afro-Cuban *son* to create a new rhythm of powerfully poetic drama.

Duende de Lorca premieres on January 14, 2011 at El Centro Milagro in Portland, Oregon before launching on a national tour through November 2011. For more information about booking a performance or scheduling a "Journeys" workshop at your location, contact us by calling (503) 236-7253, writing touring@milagro.org or visiting www.milagro.org.

Duende de Lorca can also be paired with "Journeys" workshops of self-discovery, which encourage participants to celebrate their individuality through theatre, poetry and visual art.

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