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Lorca

Plays: Two

The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife

The Love of Don Perlimplín

The Puppet Play of Don Cristóbal

The Butterfly's Evil Spell • When Five Years Pass

Translated and introduced by Gwynne Edwards

B L O O M S B U R Y

Federico García Lorca

Plays: Two

The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife, The Love of Don Perlimplín, The Puppet Play of Don Cristóbal, The Butterfly's Evil Spell, When Five Years Pass

Spain's most celebrated dramatist, an outstanding theatre director and a significant poet and artist, Federico García Lorca was murdered by Nationalist partisans in 1936 at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.

The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife, sub-titled a 'violent farce', uses the traditional story of the old man married to the young wife to expose particular social attitudes in a traditional Spain bound by rigid concepts of decency, reputation and honour. *The Love of Don Perlimplín*, sub-titled 'an erotic print in four scenes', uses the same tradition but this time in a lighter, gentler and teasing comic tone where the deepening pathos of the old man's situation transforms him into a moving figure at the moment of his death. *The Puppet Play of Don Cristóbal* marries the tradition of the puppet play with Lorca's characteristic themes of passion and frustration as well as enabling the bold, uninhibited emotions and actions of the puppets to act as a direct attack on the 'tedious triviality' of the commercial theatre of the time. *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* was Lorca's first play and, in verse, he explores the themes of love and frustration through the characters of a butterfly, cockroaches, a scorpion and glow-worms. *When Five Years Pass*, described by the Spanish newspaper ABC as 'probably Lorca's most original and experimental contribution to the theatre', dramatises his themes in the free and fluid manner of Surrealism, with particular reference to Buñuel's *Un Chien andalou*. This translation of *When Five Years Pass* was performed for the first time at the 1989 Edinburgh Festival where it won a 'Fringe First' award.

Federico García Lorca was born in 1898, near Granada, the son of a wealthy farmer. He studied in the Faculties of Arts and Law at the provincial university before moving to the Residence for Students, a prestigious college in Madrid, during a period of intellectual and artistic ferment. He travelled in the USA and South America in 1929 and 1930, and in 1931 was made director of the touring theatre company La Barraca by the Republican government in Spain. He was murdered by Nationalist partisans in 1936. Because of his habit of reading his work aloud to friends, many plays and collections of poetry were published long after they were written. He published several books of poetry: *Book of Poems* (1921), *Songs* (1927), *Gypsy Ballads* (1928), *Poem of Deep Song* (1931) and *First Songs* (1936). His stage plays include: *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* (1920), *Mariana Pineda* (1927), *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife* (1930), *Blood Wedding* (1933), *The Love of Don Perlimplín* (1933), *Yerma* (1934), *When Five Years Pass* (rehearsed reading, 1936) and *The House of Bernarda Alba* (private reading, 1936).

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FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

Plays: Two

The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife
The Love of Don Perlimplín and
Belisa in the Garden
The Puppet Play of Don Cristóbal
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The Love of Don Perlimpin and Belisa in the Garden

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The Puppet Play of Don Cristóbal

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The Butterfly's Evil Spell

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When Five Years Pass

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Federico García Lorca: A Chronology

- 1898 Born on 5 June in Fuentevaqueros, near Granada, the eldest of the four children of Don Federico García Rodríguez, a prosperous farmer, and Doña Vicenta Lorca Romero. An illness at two months prevents him from attending school until he is four. Educated at home by his mother.
- 1902/3 The family moves to Valderrubio, near Fuentevaqueros. Lorca goes to school.
- 1909 The family moves to Granada. Lorca attends the College of the Sacred Heart.
- 1914 Begins his studies at the University of Granada in the Faculties of Arts and Law, without enthusiasm.
- 1915 Studies piano and guitar, attends the Conservatory and gives some private recitals. Friendship with Fernando de los Ríos, Professor of Political Law at the University. Begins to attend literary gatherings at the Café Alameda in Granada.
- 1917 In spring and summer educational visits, organized by Martín Domínguez Berrueta, Professor of Art Theory at the University, to different cities and regions of Andalusia and Castile. A meeting in Granada with Manuel de Falla further stimulates Lorca's love of music.
- 1918 Lorca publishes his first book, *Impressions and Landscapes*, based on the trips of the previous year.
- 1919 Lorca leaves Granada for Madrid and commences a ten-year stay at the Residence for Students. Amongst his close friends are Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, champions of the *avant-garde*. Lorca strives to conceal his homosexuality. Writes his first play, *The Butterfly's Evil Spell*.
- 1920 *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* staged at the Teatro Eslava in Madrid, 22 March. Closes after four performances.
- 1921 Publication of Lorca's first volume of poetry, *Book of Poems*.
- 1922 Gives a lecture on 'deep song' at the Granada Conservatory. With Manuel de Falla, Lorca organizes the Festival of Deep Song, which is held in Granada on 13 and 14 June.

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- 1923 Presents with Manuel de Falla a children's play festival celebrated at the Lorca household in Granada and including his own puppet play, *The Girl Who Waters the Basil Plant*.
- 1924 Friendship with the poet, Rafael Alberti. Works on poems to be published subsequently in *Songs* and *Gypsy Ballads*, and on his play, *Mariana Pineda*.
- 1925 Visits the home of Salvador Dalí at Cadaqués, north-east Spain. Friendship with Dalí's sister, Ana María. Reads *Mariana Pineda* at the Dalí home.
- 1926 Lectures in Granada: 'The Poetic Image in Don Luis de Góngora'. Writes the first version of *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife*.
- 1927 Edits the first number of the literary magazine, *Cockerel*. Publishes *Songs*, his second volume of poetry. Première of *Mariana Pineda*, to considerable acclaim, on 24 June at the Teatro Goya in Barcelona. Exhibits drawings at the Galerías Dalmau in Barcelona. *Mariana Pineda* opens in Madrid on 12 October at the Teatro Fontalba.
- 1928 Publication of *Gypsy Ballads*, to become Lorca's best-known volume of poetry. Lectures in Granada: 'Imagination, Inspiration and Evasion in Poetry'; and 'Sketch of Modern Painting', with illustrations of pictures by Dalí and Miró. Lectures at the Residence for Students: 'Lullabies'. Completes *The Love of Don Perlimplín*. He is increasingly depressed. Involvement in an affair with a sculptor, Emilio Aladrén.
- 1929 End of the affair with Aladrén. June marks the beginning of a nine-month visit to the United States. Enrols as a student of English language at Columbia University. Spends August at Eden Mills in Vermont and September at Newburgh, before returning to New York.
- 1930 Works on *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife* and the poems that would form the volume *Poet in New York*, published in 1940. Arrives in Cuba in the spring, works on *The Public* and *When Five Years Pass*. Returns to Spain in the autumn. Première of *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife* at the Teatro Español in Madrid on 24 December.
- 1931 Publication of *Poem of Deep Song*. Completes *The Public* and *When Five Years Pass* and works on the puppet play,

- The Puppet Play of Don Cristóbal*. Under the auspices of the new Republican government becomes director of the touring theatre company, *La Barraca*.
- 1932 Tours with *La Barraca*. Reads *Poet in New York* in Barcelona.
- 1933 Première of *Blood Wedding*, directed by Lorca, at the Teatro Beatriz in Madrid, 8 March. A huge success. Première, 5 April, at the Teatro Español, of *The Love of Don Perlimplín*. Collaborates in May with Manuel de Falla on a production at the Residence for Students of *Love the Magician*. Works on *Yerma* and directs *La Barraca*. Travels to Argentina in September and directs *Mariana Pineda*, *Blood Wedding* and *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife* in Buenos Aires. A triumphant enterprise.
- 1934 Returns to Buenos Aires in March to direct his adaptation of Lope de Vega's *The Foolish Lady*. Continues to direct *La Barraca* in Spain. Writes *Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías*. Première of *Yerma*, to great public and critical acclaim, 29 December, at the Teatro Español.
- 1935 Production of an extended version of *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife*, 18 March, at the Teatro Coliseum in Madrid. Performance, directed by Lorca, of *The Puppet Play of Don Cristóbal*. Production of *Yerma*, 17 September, in Barcelona, and in the same city, on 13 December, triumphant première of *Doña Rosita the Spinster* at the Teatro Principal Palace.
- 1936 Publication of volume of poetry, *First Songs*. Declines invitation to Mexico to direct his plays. Completes *The House of Bernarda Alba* on 19 June and reads it to his friends on 24 June. The Theatre Club Anfistora rehearses *When Five Years Pass*. Second private reading of *The House of Bernarda Alba* on 15 July. On 16 July Lorca leaves Madrid for Granada. Military insurrection, led by Franco, on 18 July. Granada falls to the military, 20 July. Lorca hides in the house of the poet, Luis Rosales, is arrested on 16 August, detained in the Civil Government building. In the early hours of 19 August he is driven away and shot in the head outside the village of Viznar by members of the Assault Guard and the paramilitary 'Black Squad'. His body was never found.

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Introduction

Federico García Lorca was born on 5 June 1898 in the village of Fuentevaqueros, near Granada, the eldest of the four children of Don Federico García Rodríguez and Doña Vicenta Lorca Romero. His father, a prosperous farmer, was a strong and active man who in later years would accept only reluctantly his eldest son's dedication to poetry and theatre. Doña Vicenta, on the other hand, was a former schoolteacher whose interest in Federico's early education proved to be crucial, for the fever which struck the boy down at two months affected his early attendance at school. Crucial too in relation to his development as a writer was his childhood contact with the Andalusian countryside, its people and its customs, all of which were an endless source of fascination to him. From his mother and the household servants he became familiar with the songs and stories of southern Spain that colour so strongly his poems and plays. His theatrical interest was stimulated too by the gift of a toy theatre. Surrounded by family, servants and local children, he presented entertainments of his own devising, manipulated the puppet figures, designed the costumes and controlled the whole performance in a way that already anticipated his future role as a dramatist-director.

The family move to Granada itself in 1909, when Federico was eleven, was important in many ways. This fascinating city, distinguished by its exotic mixture of Arabic, Greco-Roman and gypsy tradition and boasting amongst its architectural delights the Palace of the Alhambra, became in a sense Lorca's real birthplace and would occupy a central position in all his mature work. In addition, Granada was a city of culture, especially of music, and it allowed Lorca, under the guidance of Don Antonio Segura, to develop and display to a wider public his considerable talent as a pianist. An important consequence of this was an initial contact with the increasingly famous composer, Manuel de Falla, which led eventually to lasting friendship, a mutual interest in traditional Spanish music, and collaboration in the presentation of some of Lorca's puppet plays. Furthermore, Granada contained many other highly talented people who would influence the young man in different ways: Fernando de los Ríos, Professor of Political Law at the University, was one of the most distinguished humanists

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and scholars of the day; Martín Domínguez Berrueta, Professor of Art Theory, encouraged the writing of Lorca's first book, *Impressions and Landscapes*, published in 1918; Juan Cristóbal was a talented sculptor; Ángel Barrios and Andrés Segovia were brilliant guitarists; José Fernández Montesinos was a well-known literary critic, and José Mora Guarnido a successful journalist. At the same time Granada received amongst its foreign visitors writers and musicians as famous as H. G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling, Wanda Landowska and Arthur Rubenstein. It was little wonder that the teenage Lorca should be inspired by such talent, and he was clearly further stimulated by the regular literary meetings that took place at the Café Alameda where many of Granada's 'bohemian' set discussed their current plans and projects. On the other hand, this was a time in which Lorca's awareness of his homosexual tendencies fostered in him a sense of frustration and isolation – very evident in *Book of Poems* (1921) – and when others too became conscious of that aspect of his character to which a predominantly 'macho' society would react with hostility and horror. Significantly, his brother Francisco omitted all reference to Federico's homosexuality in his important book, *Federico and his World*, published as recently as 1980.

In April 1919 Lorca left Granada for Madrid where he entered the Residence for Students, an academic institution of great prestige modelled on the Oxbridge college system and founded nine years previously. When Lorca arrived, Luis Buñuel had already been at the Residence for two years and they soon became close friends, and 1922 saw the arrival of Salvador Dalí. The names are sufficient to conjure up an impression of the excitement, intellectual stimulus and creative energy with which the Residence abounded in those days, and there were others, too, connected in one way or another with the building: the poets Emilio Prados and Rafael Alberti; the musicians Ernesto Hallfter and Gustavo Durán; the writers José Bergamín and Rafael Martínez Nadal, and frequent foreign visitors such as François Mauriac and Igor Stravinsky. Needless to say, the various 'isms' of that time, from Dadaism to Surrealism, were debated with enthusiasm, the writings of Freud were seized upon by eager minds, and the creative writers and artists of the Residence, often neglecting their formal studies, threw themselves with abandon into their own projects. Lorca was to remain there for ten years and produce much of his best work, especially poetry.

The question of Lorca's homosexuality evidently preoccupied many of his friends, even in an atmosphere as liberal and open as that of the Residence. Given the nature of Spanish society and its hostility towards homosexuals, Lorca did little to draw attention to himself in that respect, and some of his closest friends appear not to have been aware that he was in any way different. Others, however, suspected him and, in the words of José Moreno Villa, 'kept their distance'. One of the residents, Martín Domínguez, appears to have spread rumours about Lorca which on one occasion prompted a disturbed and disbelieving Buñuel to confront him directly with the question: 'Is it true you're a queer?' Buñuel has described Lorca's sense of hurt and shock, but he did not answer the question and Buñuel himself insists that there was nothing effeminate about him. Pepín Bello, another close friend, has emphatically denied that Lorca was homosexual, though he notes that he did not share most of the other students' obsession with the opposite sex. The evidence suggests the extent to which he managed to conceal his homosexuality, for there is little doubt that he did have homosexual relationships. His close friendship with Salvador Dalí contained a strong element of sexual attraction on his part, if we are to believe Dalí's subsequent affirmations, but there is no suggestion of an actual physical relationship between them. For the most part Lorca's feelings were clearly suppressed, but his sense of frustration and uncanny understanding of the female mind were both to surface in his plays.

The performance of Lorca's first play, *The Butterfly's Evil Spell*, took place in Madrid on 22 March 1920. The hostile reception of a work whose characters are a butterfly, cockroaches, a scorpion and glow-worms was a bitter blow to him, and when he returned to stage-writing with *Mariana Pineda*, completed in 1925 and premièred in 1927, it was not with a subject that was risky or a treatment that was boldly *avant-garde*, but with the traditional story of a liberal heroine of Granada, her opposition to the King, Ferdinand VII, her doomed love for another liberal, Pedro, and her final execution. The play's success compensated for the earlier failure. In 1926 Lorca started work on another play, *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife*, first performed in 1930 and then in a revised form in 1933, while in 1928 he completed *The Love of Don Perlimplin*, premièred in 1933. In both plays Lorca employed a traditional subject – the young wife married to a much older man – expressed in the traditional forms of puppet

play and farce, but there is clear evidence now both of a new confidence in his own ability and of a desire to push beyond the limitations of tradition. On the one hand, farce often slips into tragedy. On the other, Lorca's stage technique, combining setting, costume, movement, dialogue, music and lighting, is part of that exciting theatrical experimentation of the first quarter of the century, exemplified by such European innovators as Maeterlinck, Yeats and Edward Gordon Craig.

As far as Lorca's other writing is concerned, the 1920s saw the publication of three volumes of poetry: *Book of Poems* in 1921; *Songs* in 1927, and the outstandingly successful *Gypsy Ballads* in 1928. His fame grew too with the important lectures he gave in these years, especially 'The Poetic Image of Don Luis de Góngora' and 'Imagination, Inspiration and Evasion in Poetry', but towards the end of the decade he became strangely and deeply depressed. Whatever the cause – and a homosexual relationship with a young sculptor, Emilio Aladrén, has been suggested – the decision was taken that Lorca should leave Spain for a while. In the summer of 1929 he arrived in New York with his friend and former teacher at the University of Granada, Fernando de los Ríos.

New York, far from lifting Lorca's spirits, presented him with a spectacle of tasteless commercialism and, in the case of the Blacks of Harlem, of people oppressed by their poor circumstances, removed from their natural environment, and often attempting to imitate their white masters in a desperate effort to improve their lot. Unable to speak English – his few phrases included 'Tim-es Esquare' and 'ham and eggs' in a thick Spanish accent – Lorca found himself largely alienated and isolated in a city markedly different from his beloved Granada, and was glad to escape to Cuba in the spring of 1930. Nevertheless, the New York experience led to the composition of three very striking and ambitious works: the difficult but moving volume of poems, *Poet in New York*, first published in its entirety in 1940; and the two extremely bold 'surrealist' plays, *The Public* and *When Five Years Pass*, completed in 1930 and 1931 respectively, and which Lorca regarded as being far ahead of their time.

His return to Spain in the summer of 1930 coincided with the fall of the seven-year dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, while the election of a republican government in 1931 created an atmosphere of political and artistic freedom in which Lorca's

talents flourished as never before. His appointment in 1931 as director of a government-sponsored touring theatre company, commonly known as *La Barraca*, allowed him to perform to rural audiences many of the great plays of the 'classic' Spanish dramatists Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina and Calderón and, more importantly, to evolve a style of performance involving music, dance and simply stylized sets that shook off the dust of years of stuffiness in relation to their presentation. The inter-relationship of Lorca's experiments with *La Barraca* and his own creative writing cannot be over-emphasized, for nowhere is the mix of Spanish popular tradition and modern dramatic technique better exemplified than in the four great plays written at this time: *Blood Wedding* (1933), *Yerma* (1934), *Doña Rosita the Spinster* (1935) and *The House of Bernarda Alba* (1936). With the performance of *Blood Wedding*, Lorca became the most celebrated Spanish dramatist of his day, acclaimed in his own country and in South America. At the same time he continued to write poetry, notably the great poem of 1934 occasioned by the death of a bullfighter friend, *Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías*, and the poems, influenced by Arabic poetry, that would become the *Diván del Tamarit*.

By the beginning of 1936 the hopes that had accompanied the inauguration of the Second Spanish Republic five years earlier lay in tatters and the country found itself in a state of political crisis. When, on 18 July, Franco's military rebellion against the Madrid government set the Civil War in motion, Lorca was in Granada. It was not long before the rebel troops occupied the city and, with the eager assistance of fascist supporters, began to 'clean up' the town and its surrounding areas. Lorca's brother-in-law, Manuel Montesinos, mayor of Granada and a steadfast supporter of the Republic, was one of the first to be shot, and Lorca himself was soon obliged to take refuge in the house of a friend and fellow-poet, Luis Rosales. On the afternoon of 16 August he was arrested and taken to government headquarters where he was held for two more days. From there he was driven away, probably in the early hours of 19 August, and shot in the countryside outside the village of Viznar. In a time when political and personal differences were inextricably mixed, the combination of Lorca's republican sympathies, his homosexuality and his enormous fame was more than sufficient to afford his enemies the opportunity of ridding Granada and Spain of one of her most illustrious sons.

II

Lorca's first play, *The Butterfly's Evil Spell*, received its première at the Teatro Eslava in Madrid on 22 March 1920, where it was given only a handful of performances before being withdrawn. A theatre-going public accustomed to well-made plays with well-drawn characters from the middle class and above, and witty and elegant dialogue, was only too ready to boo from the stage a piece in verse whose characters were cockroaches, a butterfly, a scorpion and glow-worms. For Lorca, who had arrived in Madrid less than a year before, the experience was disheartening and he was not to write another play for several years; but it also taught him that a bourgeois public had to be educated into the acceptance of new theatrical styles.

The artistic director of the Teatro Eslava between 1917 and 1925 was Gregorio Martínez Sierra, who was greatly interested in contemporary Spanish and foreign dramatists, as well as *avant-garde* stage-design, and who had also, as a translator, helped to familiarize educated Spaniards with the work of such writers as Barrie, Courteline, Tristan Bernard and Maurice Maeterlinck. Having heard Lorca recite some poems about insects, one of which had as its protagonist a young cockroach who falls in love with a wounded butterfly, Martínez Sierra invited him to write a play on the subject which he would produce and direct at the Eslava. As for Lorca himself, his arrival at the Residence for Students in Madrid in 1919 had already exposed him to and fired his enthusiasm for progressive movements in the arts, and there is little doubt that he accepted Martínez Sierra's invitation with enthusiasm.

The sources of *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* are to be found not only in Lorca's early poetry but also in such plays at Maeterlinck's *L'Oiseau Bleu*, written in 1905 and much admired by Martínez Sierra. There the two children, Tytyl and Mytyl, search for the Blue Bird which will cure a neighbour's sick child, only to fail in their quest and see it fly away. Lorca's poem, as we have seen, dealt with an injured butterfly which escapes despite the cockroach's love for it. The themes of his first play are, indeed, those which are central to his theatre as a whole and which spring from his own experience: love and frustration above all. But they are themes which Lorca develops, as he does in all his subsequent work, in a way which highlights not their personal but their

universal nature, and which is greatly influenced by the symbolist theatre of the early part of the century, Maeterlinck being one of its chief exponents. In the sense that symbolism was concerned with the expression of universal truths, with the archetypal rather than the specific 'here and now', the insect characters of Lorca's play are essentially symbolist: generic figures who embody universal experiences. The play's protagonist, Boybeetle, is thus the very essence of youth: handsome, passionate, idealistic. Sylvia, who loves Boybeetle, is equally the epitome of female beauty and illusion. The Butterfly, the object of Boybeetle's longing, has a fragile, shimmering beauty and, in the end, an inaccessibility which encapsulates both the urgency of quest and the anguish of failure. The Fireflies, whose beauty fades with the passage of time, are an image of old age, and Scorpy, the scorpion who constantly threatens the insects with his great pincers, an effective reminder of the presence of death. The insect world of the play is therefore, in its concentration of themes, both a microcosm of human experience and of Lorca's drama as a whole; and Boybeetle, Sylvia, Scorpy and the Fireflies are equally the young men and women, the old men and women, and the instruments of fate and death of the later plays: the Bridegroom and the Bride (*Blood Wedding*); the Young Man, the Girlfriend and the Secretary (*When Five Years Pass*); the Woodcutters (*Blood Wedding*); the Old Man (*When Five Years Pass*), the Aunt and the Housekeeper (*Doña Rosita the Spinster*); and the grandmother, Maria Josefa (*The House of Bernarda Alba*).

In emphasizing the serious aspects of *The Butterfly's Evil Spell*, it would be wrong, however, to ignore its many comic elements. That sheer sense of fun which many of Lorca's friends commented on, and which is so apparent in the puppet-plays and farces, allowed him to view the romantic yearnings of his insect lovers with cheerful irony, to present the older characters, like Doña Beetle, with a practical unsentimental view of life which amusingly pricks the bubble of youthful optimism, and to create in the character of Scorpy a monster of voracious appetite and excess who is at once frightening and extremely funny. This interplay of serious and comic elements is, indeed, a fundamental aspect of Lorca's work and in such plays as *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife* and *Doña Rosita the Spinster* achieves a fine balance.

In terms of style and technique, *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* is

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distinguished by that stylization so revered by the symbolists and embracing, as did the plays of Maeterlinck and W. B. Yeats, different art forms. Apart from being a poet and writer, Lorca had a great enthusiasm for drawing and painting, and even designed the costumes and sets for a performance of Manuel de Falla's ballet suite, *Love the Magician*, in 1933. His friendship with de Falla, which seems to have begun prior to the writing of *The Butterfly's Evil Spell*, stemmed undoubtedly from his love of music and prodigious pianistic ability. This familiarity with different art forms, coupled with a strong anti-naturalistic bias, is already marked in this first play and would become a distinguishing feature of his dramatic style. The stage-directions demand a bold stylization that is not merely decorative but serves as a frame for the dreams and illusions of the characters. The lighting of the stage, ranging from the pure light of dawn of the opening scene to the darkness that slowly descends throughout Act Two, accompanies the emotional journey of Boybeetle, in particular, from bright hope to dark despair. Throughout the play movement is used expressively, from the Butterfly's faltering dance in Act Two to the lumbering movements of Scorpy and the violent swings of his axe-like pincer. And the language, encompassing poetic flights of fancy on the one hand and earthy vulgarity on the other, has a music which both expresses the essential nature of the different characters and harmonizes with the other elements of performance. In its championing of total theatre *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* reflects the *avant-garde* of Lorca's youth and announces the predominant thrust of his own work.

III

Lorca's first version of *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife* was written in 1926 but the play was not completed until 1930, receiving its première at the Teatro Español in Madrid on 24 December, the part of the Wife played by the famous Spanish actress, Margarita Xirgu, the costumes designed by Picasso. Sub-titled a 'violent farce', the play is a good example both of a well-established theatrical tradition and an important direction in Lorca's theatre. The tradition of farce in Spain extends from the fifteenth to the twentieth century, embracing such writers as Lope de Rueda and Cervantes in earlier times, and more recently Carlos

Arniches and, in particular, Ramón del Valle-Inclán. Needless to say, the form allowed for the presentation of stock characters in comic situations, but in the early part of the twentieth century especially, writers like Valle-Inclán began to exploit other possibilities, including bitter social satire and the idea of the absurdity and futility of the human condition: in short, the capacity of farce to project not merely comic situations but serious ideas.

As for Lorca himself, even as a child he had amused his family and friends with the performance of plays of his own devising in the little puppet-theatre bought for him by his parents. Later, in 1923, he was to organize with Manuel de Falla a children's festival at which three plays were presented, two of them comic: Cervantes's *The Two Gossips* and his own puppet-play, *The Girl Who Waters the Basil Plant*. The comic tradition was one which was clearly very close to Lorca's heart and its place in his work is easily explained. Quite apart from his own capacity for humour, he saw comedy both as a means of holding the attention of an audience and of presenting it with serious themes which a comic treatment made more readily acceptable. In addition, farce allowed Lorca, precisely because of its emphasis on exaggeration in relation to character and situation, to escape the confines of naturalism, which he so detested.

As far as theme is concerned, Lorca used the traditional story of the old man married to the young wife to expose particular social attitudes. In a world where men should rule the roost and women fulfil male needs, the hen-pecked Shoemaker and his childless wife are already in Act One an object of scorn and mockery, while his attempts to plead with her and her provocative if innocent flirtations with others merely make things worse. At the end of Act One he abandons her, inviting public condemnation, while she, by running an inn to make ends meet, indulges in the socially unacceptable. The world which Lorca depicts in all its spiteful narrow-mindedness is, of course, that traditional Spain, bound by rigid concepts of decency, reputation and honour, which is part of the tragic conflict of his rural tragedies and of which, in a sense, he would also be a victim. The positive alternative to it is presented in Act Three, for the Wife rejects her many suitors and in retaining her integrity embodies a concept of personal goodness far superior to the villagers' view of honour as public reputation. When husband and wife are reunited

and resolved to defy gossip, Lorca ends the play with a bold assertion of the true meaning of honour. In addition, the strained relationship of the married couple points to the undesirability of the marriage of convenience, so common in Spain, while the Wife's ludicrous suitors embody in their different ways the typical attitudes of the Spanish male towards women.

Quite apart from its social implications, *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife* also explores those typically Lorcan themes mentioned already in relation to *The Butterfly's Evil Spell*. The Wife, dreaming of love and happiness, is another form of Boybeetle, her quest embodied in the butterfly which appears in the room at the end of Act One. The Shoemaker too has his dreams, but for both of them longing leads, as it does in all Lorca's theatre, to the frustration of hopes destroyed, even if in this particular play the outcome is not tragic. The Shoemaker, alluding frequently to his own past youth, is also one of a long line of characters in both comedies and tragedies who are witnesses to passing time, echoing on the one hand the Fireflies of *The Butterfly's Evil Spell*, anticipating on the other the Old Man of *When Five Years Pass*, Rosita, the Aunt and the Housekeeper of *Dōna Rosita the Spinster*, and the women, young and old, of *The House of Bernarda Alba* who see their beauty fade as the months and years go by. The characters of Lorca's 'violent farce' may indeed be amusing, but they are, no less than those of his other plays, images of human experience whose universality is very clear.

As far as style is concerned, *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife* embraces both the bold simplified character of farce and the poetic stylization of symbolism. The setting for Act One, for instance, with its white walls and large window and doors, owes much to the puppet-play tradition in which the sets are frames for exaggerated and vigorous action. On the other hand, the creation of mood and lighting belongs quite clearly to the symbolist theatre of Maeterlinck, W. B. Yeats and Edward Gordon Craig. When, for example, the butterfly is pursued by the Boy and the Wife, the fading light, the hushed dialogue, and the lovely song addressed to the butterfly evoke a magical, poetic mood that is quite removed from the world of farce, looking back to *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* and forward to moments when Yerma and the daughters of Bernarda Alba dream impossible dreams.

Given these highly poetic moments, the greater influence

remains that of farce, and costume, movement, gesture and language largely contribute to that end through their boldness and exaggeration. In this respect the costumes of the characters are particularly striking, from the 'strident green' and 'flame-red' dresses of the Wife herself to the red, purple, black, green, and yellow dresses of her neighbours, their stark and immediate visual impact expressive of the aggression which they show towards the Wife. Character is revealed too, of course, in movement and action, be it the Shoemaker's hammering of the shoes or the Wife's stamping of her feet and slamming of doors and windows. The dialogue also often consists of violent outbursts, either between the Shoemaker and the Wife or the Wife and the villagers and has something of the character of a Punch and Judy show. But in the end *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife*, for all its comic moments, is more than just an amusing play. The characters are as much the object of our sympathy as our laughter, their problems as acute and as moving as those of their counterparts in the later, more 'serious' plays. Lorca's achievement in *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife* is both to have given a comic form an underlying seriousness and to have created characters who move us both to laughter and to tears.

IV

The Love of Don Perlimplín and Belisa in the Garden was completed in 1928. Plans for a production at the Sala Rex in Madrid in 1929 were abandoned when the theatre was suddenly closed by the police, ostensibly as a mark of respect to the recently deceased Queen Mother, María Cristina, more probably because the authorities objected to the role of the cuckolded Perlimplín being played by a former military officer. The play was finally premièred on 5 April 1933 at the Teatro Español where it was directed by Lorca himself and acclaimed by the critics.

Like *The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife*, the play deals with the story of the older man married to the young and beautiful wife. There are similarities too in the sense that the marriage is arranged, the partners are incompatible, and the tone is often highly comic. On the other hand, *The Love of Don Perlimplín*, though belonging to the tradition of farce, was sub-titled by Lorca 'an erotic print in four scenes', and it is certainly true to say that