



# **Audience and Authority in the Modernist Theater of Federico Garcia Lorca**

*C. Christopher Soufas*

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Arguably the most significant literary figure of 20th-century Spain, Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936) was an accomplished poet, playwright, lecturer, musician, painter, and theater director. After an immensely creative period working in a variety of media, in the early 1930s Lorca turned his attention to writing and staging plays, the most famous of which are *Blood Wedding*, *Yerma*, and *The House of Bernarda Alba*. Despite his international reputation and the widespread translation of his poetry and plays since his assassination by Franco's soldiers in 1936, this is the first study to chart Lorca's specific attitudes toward theater in relation to his historical audience.

Soufas provides a reading of Lorca's theater from the vantage point of Modernist aesthetics as well as historical performance dynamics. It is premised on the assumption that Lorca's theater emerges as a consequence of an ongoing dialog with his historical audience, a rather conservative and uncultured milieu that had largely dictated the agenda of the Madrid theater scene during the 1920s.

Soufas takes as a critical point of departure the idea that any literary study of theater must also include and account for the complete process by which a script is converted into a stage production. In most instances, dramatic authority is at least in part a function of how well a dramatist deals with the historical audience that initially judges the worth of the productions. Soufas' approach solves the problem of how to evaluate Lorca's theater; by placing his work in a performance context, Soufas uncovers a significant aspect of the evolution of Lorca's theater.

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