

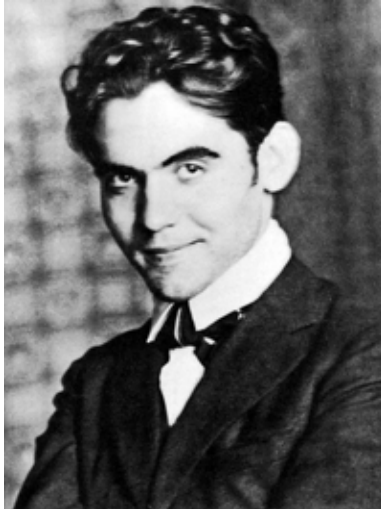
Por el aire dulzón  
ha cruzado una abeja.

La hormiga, agonizando,  
huele la tarde inmensa,  
y dice: "Es la que viene  
a llevarme a una estrella."

A bee has crossed  
through the sickly sweet air.

The dying ant  
smells the immense evening,  
and says: "they've come  
to take me to a star."

So reads the climax of *Los encuentros de un caracol aventurero* (*The Encounters of an Adventurous Snail*), an early poem by



Spanish poet-playwright **Federico Garcia Lorca**. In it, a snail meets an ant who has been put to death by its colony, all for the crime of stargazing. The poem is dated 1918; shortly

after, according to biographer Ian Gibson, Lorca would recite another poem on insect themes – one in which a butterfly falls to earth and is cared for by a colony of roaches (or beetles, depending on who is translating), one of whom falls into an "impossible" love with the butterfly.

Lorca read the poem for a private audience, which included Gregorio Martínez Sierra, the artistic director at the Teatro Eslava in Madrid. Martínez Sierra loved the poem, and insisted at once that the poet adapt it for the Eslava stage. Lorca agreed, and went to work writing his first play.

But, upon the debut of *El maleficio de la mariposa* (*The Butterfly's Evil Spell*) in March of 1920, Lorca and Martínez Sierra found that the audience was not so enthusiastic. The opening night was racked with hecklers, jeers, and interruptions. The production lasted only three more performances, and received negative reviews. The critics agreed that Lorca was a talented poet, but that *El maleficio* was "hardly theatre." **They wondered how any writer could put such delicate verses – about love, about being**

**out of place and about the existence of God – in the ignoble mouths of insects.**

It is an unfortunate irony that a play about being misunderstood should itself be misunderstood – especially when one considers that living an authentic life, in the face of total suffocation, is as potent and human a theme in *La casa de Bernarda Alba* as it is in *El maleficio*, and in the insect poems.

The question of society's ability to accept the Other is what draws *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* director **Dr. Danielle Georgiou** to the story. **She felt "seen" by the titular Butterfly, and was compelled to think about "how society treats women, immigrants, their families," and anyone else who might not "fit in."** What's more, Georgiou sees the open, incomplete nature of the text as an invitation to play. **"I enjoy when a script doesn't give you all the answers, so you can create and imagine what the world could and should be...you can and you should [play], otherwise it will remain misunderstood."**

Assistant director **Alejandro Saucedo** agrees, while connecting the task of imagination to the characters themselves. Recalling the theme of stargazing, Saucedo asks, **"what do you lose when you start looking up? Up means everything: up means forward, up means outside of yourself...[the characters of the play] decided to stop looking up, they decided to stop challenging things."**

Perhaps in looking up, we might gain a little perspective. What will we see? Will it be what's above us, or will we look back down at an unfamiliar world? And how will we see ourselves? **"Truly," Georgiou asks, "aren't we all bugs in this universe?"**

– Dante Flores, Dramaturg/Translator and Adaptor of *The Butterfly's Evil Spell*