

Stage: 'Bernarda Alba' Produced in Spanish

By RICHARD F. SHEPARD

LA CASA de Bernarda Alba," a harsh and brooding piece that deals with family repression and honor written by Federico García Lorca, the outstanding poet-dramatist who died during the Spanish Civil War, is being infused with the breath of life by the Spanish Theater Repertory Company, New York's own fine Spanish-language repertory troupe.

The play is about the life of women in the tradition-bound villages of Spain. It is done in Spanish and has an all-female cast. It speaks of knife-edge issues, the struggle between the individual who wants to cast off inhibition and seek personal fulfillment and the society that imposes unyielding restrictions upon its members, particularly the women. It is a play with melodramatic themes, but García Lorca has put aside the temptation to let it maunder, scream or otherwise let the emotions take over.

What is left is the portrait of a stern, unyielding woman, Bernarda Alba, who has just buried her second husband and is in charge of a household consisting of five unmarried, plain-looking daughters ranging in age from 20 to 39; a lunatic old mother, and a few maids. A very young man is going to marry the oldest daughter, but he is having an affair with the youngest. There is unhappiness and jealousy and, above all, Bernarda Alba, cruelly keeping her daughters isolated from the world in a house of perpetual mourning, speaking of honor and virtue and purity as the end-all of her goals.

The drama ends with the suicide of the youngest daughter and Bernarda Alba's words commanding her burial as a virgin with no shedding of tears because "death must be looked in the face."

The company's production, under the direction of René Buch, completely captures the somber strength of the writing. It is set on a dark stage where black dominates, and white, in lights or in a dress, breaks through in minor, unavailing effort. Ofelia González is a powerful, perfect Bernarda Alba projecting authority and cruelty borne of pride, yet revealingly human within the limits of her society and personality. Graciela Lecube, as Poncia, the maid, brings a peasant heartiness and earthy wisdom to the otherwise drab household.

Grace Connolly as the youngest daughter and Yolanda Arenas as the oldest reflect the passions of women to whom the company of men is forbidden. Vivian Deangelo, as another daughter, heightens the tension as a girl whose jealousy drives her to maliciousness. The sets, costumes and lighting by Robert Weber Federico are immaculately executed and most imaginative.

Gilberto Zaldívar, who heads the Spanish Theater Repertory Company, has always had a García Lorca play on his seasonal schedule, but this is the



Ofelia Gonzalez as Bernarda Alba in Federico García Lorca's "La Casa de Bernarda Alba" at the Gramercy Arts.

Women and Tradition

LA CASA DE BERNARDA ALBA (The House of Bernarda Alba), in Spanish, by Federico García Lorca. Directed by René Buch; scenery, lights and costumes by Robert Weber Federico; music by Harry Sourvinos. Presented by Gilberto Zaldívar, at the Spanish Theater Repertory Company, 138 East 27th Street.

María Josefa	Alicia Carmona
Bernarda Alba	Ofelia González
Angustias	Yolanda Arenas
Poncia	Graciela Lecube
Magdalena	Myrna Colon
Amelia	Christina San Juan
Maid	Aida Linares
Marlirio	Vivian Deangelo
Adela	Grace Connolly
Prudencia	Carmen Gutierrez
Neighbor	Marilyn Gaulau
Girl	Carmen Iris Camacho

first time he has presented "La Casa de Bernarda Alba." It is an asset to the New York theater scene. If you have a fair knowledge of Spanish and have read it in English translation, you will be in a position to appreciate it in the original.