

Theater: Lorca's 'Alba'

By HOWARD THOMPSON

Even if you don't understand a word of Spanish, trot over fast to see what the ADAL Theater has done with Lorca's "The House of Bernarda Alba." A quick reading of the play, easily available in English and one of Spain's theater jewels, will suffice. The ADAL unit trenchantly brings it to life.



It is the best of three productions that this viewer has seen (including one in Spain) and rather astonishingly so. For Lorca's famous casa, where a widow, her five daughters and a servant collide in a stifling atmosphere of despair, frustration and hate, is constructed with a lyrical severity that allows little fiddling around in either playing or staging.

Boldly and imaginatively, the director, Max Ferra, has ritualistically reined in the action front and center, including some white, hand-held mask outlines that pro-

vide a striking opening and closing tableau. Beyond an arched-cage backdrop, the play opens surrealistically on a beautiful, bizarre bower, a wonderfully effective entrance for the dotty old grandma, another casa inmate.

The result vivifies both the theme and the action—and faithfully, although Lorca's hatred now seems more like unified grief. Perhaps this is why, for once, the mother, played by a fine Cuban actress named Ofelia Gonzalez, doesn't jut out of the play like the prow of a ship.



Fittingly, the play, which runs on week-ends through April 2, has opened the attractive, 90-seat ADAL showcase, sponsored by the New York State Council on the Arts. The address is 508 West 53d Street. The theater is housed in the new headquarters of International Arts Relations, Inc.