

# *Famous visitors: Federico Garcia Lorca*

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Federico Garcia Lorca described his arrival in Havana in the spring of 1930 in exquisitely poetic terms...

...the smell of palm and cinnamon, the perfumes of the Americas with their roots, the Americas of God. But what is this? Spain, again? Andalusia again? It is the yellow color of Cádiz with a more intense shade, the rose of Sevilla almost red and the green of Granada with a light fish-like phosphorescence.

And what welcomes me in the port? The sound of maracas, divine bugles and marimbas. And the blacks with the rhythms that I discovered as typical of my great Andalusian people, negritos without despair that state with pride: "We are Latin."

To that first image of color and cheerful noise experienced aboard ship while approaching Cuba, were added the enjoyment of frequent visits to the house of the Loynaz family in Vedado where Garcia Lorca established friendly links with the Cuban intelligentsia. He got acquainted both with the aristocracy of Havana and with people of less orderly life that he met at cheap bars and night clubs.

In the street food stalls where fritters were sold at Marianao and in the company of young and old entertainers, he became acquainted with son, the ardent Cuban rhythm. Then there was Varadero Beach with the passing days, his ecstasy at the sight of the Viñales Valley and the unexpected shades of a twilight at Yumurí Valley and then his trip to Santiago de Cuba, portrayed in his poem, I will go to

Santiago. Here are a few lines:

¡Oh Cuba! ¡Oh ritmo de semillas secas!

Iré a Santiago.

¡Oh cintura caliente y gota de madera!

Iré a Santiago.

¡Arpa de troncos vivos, caimán, flor de tabaco!

Iré a Santiago.

In the poem Garcia Lorca describes the island as an Arpa de troncos vivos or a harp of live trunks, because when passing by an arch formed by palm trees, he was left with the vision that a giant harp was waiting to be played by some huge hand.

When leaving Cuba, the Andalusian poet stated to his friends: "Here I have spent the best days of my life!"

The reasons were many and varied. Here he found a propitious cultural milieu, his passionate spirit expanded free of any type of pressure or conventionalism.

If Cuba impressed Garcia Lorca and provided him with new life experiences and emotions, Lorca impressed Cuba. His versatile and deep work and his personal charm of a poet planted seeds of light and love along his path over the island and that is why Cubans still think of Federico as a beloved acquaintance. So, what memories did Federico García Lorca leave in Cuba? The answer is: He left not only memories, but the energy of his personality, his spirit. Garcia Lorca is a life presence!

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