

SUNTIMES/Heidy Weisz

In fact, all you really need when heading to the festival is a curiosity about the multifaceted civilizations that come under the umbrella of "Latino" -- Mexican, Central American, South American and Spanish - - and all the corresponding cross-cultural forces (indigenous Indian, African and Spanish conquistador, with its heavy infusion of Roman Catholicism) that have been at play in such civilizations for centuries. Here is a closer look at the offerings in this two-week festival:

'AL SON QUE ME TOQUES, LORCA' (*Aug. 8-10, in Spanish with program synopsis and multimedia*)
Written in 1932, as the Spanish Civil War was just beginning to ignite, Federico Garcia Lorca's classic play "Blood Wedding" digs deep into the ferocity of rural Spanish life to tell the scandalous and tragic story of a bride who runs away with her lover, setting into motion a terrible lust for revenge. In her work "Al Son Que Me Toques, Lorca" (which can be translated as "To whatever music you play, I will dance"), adapter-director-actress Laura Crotte has reimagined Lorca's drama.

"I've set it in Veracruz, Mexico," said Crotte, who was born in Mexico City, lived and worked in Veracruz for nearly a decade, and has spent the past seven years in Chicago, working with Teatro Vista and as a resident artist in the Chicago public schools.

"Veracruz is a major port city on the Gulf of Mexico that was an entryway for the Spanish conquistadors, and a place with a large indigenous Indian and African population, a strict class structure and vast banana and sugar cane plantations. The southern portion of the city had the strongest African influence, but Spanish Catholicism suppressed the culture, so most of the dancing there is in the feet rather than the upper body. In the northern region, which is more mountainous, and more indigenous, there is a unique falsetto style of singing. I've incorporated both traditions, with my bride from the north, the groom from the south and the mother of the bride an indigenous woman, so you can feel the struggle. There are competitions among the dancers, poets and songwriters."

Performed by Chicago-area actors with Mexican, Peruvian and Colombian roots, Crotte's production will feature everything from Japanese *butoh*-inspired dance to mask work.

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