



The Cradle Song and Other Plays (With Introduction)

G. Martinez Sierra

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Canción de cuna ("Cradle Song", 1911), which has been called G. Martínez Sierra's "masterpiece", was popular across the Spanish-speaking world, and an English-language adaptation transferred to Broadway in 1927. Other plays included in this edition are "The Lover", "Love Magic", "Poor John", and Madama Pepita".

G. Martínez Sierra served an apprenticeship in the theater as an actor under Jacinto Benavente, a prominent Spanish playwright, ten years before he wrote any plays of his own. Though not his first written play, THE CRADLE SONG, CANCION DE CUNA in the original, was his first definite success in Madrid in 1911, in New York in 1921, in London in 1926, and again in New York in 1927, when Eva Le Gallienne brought it to her Civic Repertory Theater. Since that time it has been considered a success wherever it has been presented.

Gregorio Martínez Sierra (6 May 1881 – 1 October 1947) was a Spanish writer, poet, dramatist and theatre director, a key figure in the revival of the Spanish theatrical avant-garde in the early twentieth century.

Martínez Sierra's literary career began at the age of 17 with the publication of *El poema del trabajo* ('The Poem of Work', 1898), a volume of poetry in the modernist style. His subsequent books of poetry included *Diálogos fantásticos* ('Fantastic Dialogues', 1899), *Flores de escarcha* ('Frost Flowers', 1900) and *La casa de primavera* ('The House of Spring', 1907).

As a playwright, Martínez Sierra was one of the few progressive dramatists whose productions achieved any measure of commercial success at the time of their composition. His major works include *La sombra del padre* ('Shadow of the Father', 1909), *Primavera en otoño* ('Spring in Autumn', 1911), *Sólo para mujeres* ('For Women Only', 1913), *Mamá* ('Mama', 1913) and *El reino de Dios* ('The Kingdom of God', 1916). *Canción de cuna* ('Cradle Song', 1911), which has been called his "masterpiece", was popular across the Spanish-speaking world, and an English-language adaptation transferred to Broadway in 1927. Several of Martínez Sierra's plays were adapted into films, including *Canción de cuna* (as *Cradle Song*, dir. Mitchell Leisen, 1933).

The deft handling of female characters in Martínez Sierra's works has been attributed to the collaboration of his wife, the writer María Lejárraga. Since the publication of her memoir *Gregorio y yo* ('Gregorio and I', 1953), her authorship of many of his plays has been increasingly recognised by scholars.

Martínez Sierra's influence was largely as a publisher and director. Through his publishing house, *Renacimiento* ('Rebirth'), he translated the work of William Shakespeare, Maurice Maeterlinck and Santiago Rusiñol, and introduced the work of European playwrights including George Bernard Shaw and Luigi Pirandello to Spain.

In 1917 he was appointed Director of Madrid's Teatro Eslava and remained there until 1925, transforming the venue into Spain's first Art Theatre.

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