



*Contributor: Giles Morgan*

Jul 3, 2019

In July 1937 a civil war is raging between Franco's Nationalists and the Republican faction in Spain. A young German officer named Martin Bora is fighting alongside Franco's forces in the Spanish Foreign Legion in the sierras of Aragon.

For Bora the conflict is briefly interrupted when he finds the body of the celebrated Spanish poet and playwright Federico Garcia Lorca who appears to have been murdered. He is tasked by a superior with investigating who carried out Lorca's murder and discovering the motives behind the killing.

As Bora's inquiries progress it becomes apparent that an American named Walton who is fighting for the Republican side is also carrying out his own investigation and the two men make an uneasy attempt to share information. However, matters are seriously complicated when both of them begin relationships with the same woman.

Bora unpicks a complicated tale during his investigation into the death of the flamboyant, gay Spanish poet who has as many enemies as admirers in his war-torn homeland. The misery of a country at war with itself and the complexities of fractured communities is vividly evoked by author Ben Pastor in this the sixth in the Martin Bora series. *The Horseman's Song* is in fact a prequel to Bora's tale and re-visits events alluded to in earlier novels when he was in his twenties.

Pastor does a fine job of portraying the epic landscapes of the Aragon region of Spain and conveying its sun-baked sierras and dusty towns damaged by the bitter civil war. Lorca's poetry is often interwoven with the narrative of this crime thriller and indeed it takes its title from one of his poems. Bora is changed forever by both the war and Lorca's murder as his youthful zeal and idealism give way to hard-won experience and a realisation of the grim realities of war. *The Horseman's Song* is another thoughtful, poetic work from author Ben Pastor that interweaves historical reality with intriguing speculative crime fiction in both sensitive and skilful style.