

Ballet Nacional de España celebrates the centenary of Antonio Ruiz Soler in his native city by reviving some of his most outstanding choreographies

The premiere of *Centenario Antonio Ruiz Soler* will take place at Seville's Teatro de la Maestranza on 15th and 16th April

The programme also includes works by Rubén Olmo, Miguel Ángel Corbacho and Carlos Vilán inspired by the style of Antonio 'el Bailarín'

Seville, 12th April 2021. Antonio Ruiz Soler (1921–1996) was one of the dancers and choreographers who most profoundly shaped the development of Spanish dance in the twentieth century. To commemorate the artist who **directed the Ballet Nacional de España between 1980 and 1983**, the public company has devised a programme for the centenary of his birth, bringing together faithful revivals of key works from his career alongside new creations inspired by his style.

"Antonio transformed the way people danced and further elevated Spanish dance. He was also the most complete dancer, choreographer and director in its history. He mastered every discipline and created magnificent productions encompassing folklore, stylised dance, escuela bolera and flamenco. He performed in and choreographed films both in Spain and in Hollywood. He was a genius and one of those figures in Spanish dance endowed with a very special charisma. Antonio was unique," says Rubén Olmo, director of the Ballet Nacional de España.

The Ballet Nacional de España will premiere *Centenario Antonio Ruiz Soler* on 15th and 16th April at the Teatro de la Maestranza in Seville. The choreographies by Antonio 'el Bailarín' selected for the programme are ***Sonatas, Zapateado and Fantasía galaica***. The three works represent the height of his talent in three different styles: escuela bolera, flamenco stylisation and stylised folklore.

Although choreographies by Antonio Ruiz Soler have been performed under every artistic directorship, with *Eritaña, El sombrero de tres picos, Fantasía galaica* and *Zapateado* de Sarasate among the most popular, *Sonatas* had not been performed in full since its premiere at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in 1982 and the subsequent tour. "I felt it was far too rich a work to remain hidden away. I wanted it to be included in the centenary programme because this escuela bolera choreography clearly reflects the influence of classical dance technique on Antonio's style. It has a perfect structure, like a classical ballet," explains Rubén Olmo.

"Nor could we leave out *Zapateado* de Sarasate. It is perhaps the solo that brought Antonio Ruiz Soler the greatest success, as well as many Spanish dance performers who later had the opportunity to perform it. It was his signature piece," continues the director of the Ballet Nacional de España. In the programme presented in Seville, it will be performed by guest principal dancer Francisco Velasco.

Under the title ***Estampas flamencas***, the *Centenario Antonio Ruiz Soler* programme also presents the flamenco styles that Antonio frequently performed with his company, through new choreographies created by Rubén Olmo and Miguel Ángel Corbacho. "We wanted to remain faithful to Antonio's style and aesthetics and to the flamenco of the 1950s and 1960s, while updating the steps, and present a ***Martinete, Zorongo, Taranto*** and ***Caracoles*** that would evoke his figure for audiences."

Rubén Olmo particularly highlights the *Martinete*, choreographed by Miguel Ángel Corbacho. Antonio was the first to dance this flamenco form, which until then had been reserved for singing, and he always kept it as a piece for himself to perform on stage. The work premiered by the Ballet Nacional de España, performed by eleven dancers, emphasises the restraint of male dancing in traditional flamenco.

The overview of Antonio's artistic career is completed by the solo ***Leyenda***, choreographed by Carlos Vilán to Isaac Albéniz's composition ***Asturias***, another essential piece in Antonio Ruiz Soler's productions. Carlos Vilán was a principal dancer in María Rosa's company when Antonio created *El Rocío* for her in the 1990s, among other choreographies. A collaborator of the master during the final years of his career, Vilán conceived *Leyenda* in 2016 especially for Esther Jurado, guest principal dancer with the Ballet Nacional de España, who now includes it in her repertoire.

The programme also pays tribute to Antonio's film career and to the years he spent between New York and Hollywood alongside his artistic partner Rosario. Rubén Olmo recreates, together with Miriam Mendoza, soloist with the Ballet Nacional de España, the pas de deux ***Vito de gracia***, performed by **Rosario and Antonio in the 1944 film *Hollywood Canteen***. In this way, the programme also remembers the artist who accompanied him from his earliest steps as a child at Realito's academy in Seville until he founded his own company in 1953.

Fantasia galaica, based on Galician folklore, is the ensemble work that brings the *Centenario Antonio Ruiz Soler* programme to a close.

"It is one of my favourite works by Antonio because I believe it is perfectly rounded. Nothing like it has been created since," concludes Rubén Olmo.

The Royal Seville Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Manuel Coves, will perform the compositions by Padre Soler, Ernesto Halffter, Isaac Albéniz and Pablo Sarasate featured in the programme, while the Ballet Nacional de España's flamenco musicians and cantaores will accompany the dancers on

stage in *Estampas flamencas*. Guest performers will also include soprano Carmen Solís and cantaor Juan José Amador “El Perre”.

Costumes and set design

The staging of these works, premiered by the Ballet Nacional de España in Seville, remains faithful to Antonio’s original choreographies. Rehearsal directors Maribel Gallardo and Cristina Visús studied the Ballet Nacional de España’s audiovisual archive in order to recreate Antonio’s original versions as closely as possible.

Most of the choreographies in this programme also draw on the **Ballet Nacional de España’s costume archive**. The original costumes used for the premieres of *Sonatas* and *Fantasía galaica* in the 1980s were recovered and adapted for these revivals. The Wardrobe Department explored previous productions to find costumes reflecting the aesthetics of the different stages of Antonio Ruiz Soler’s professional career. For example, the female dancers in *Caracoles* embody the archetypal flamenco image associated with Spain’s tourism boom: polka-dot bata de cola dresses, flowers in their hair, curls painted on their cheeks and colourful shawls. The women’s costumes for *El vito*, meanwhile, are inspired by those worn by Carmen Amaya, featuring short jackets and full-circle skirts reminiscent of a bullfighter’s cape.

For *Leyenda (Asturias)*, however, López de Santos designed a black lace bata de cola for Esther Jurado, resembling an evening gown. For *Martinete*, the same designer created shirts with flowing sleeves tied at the waist, recreating Antonio’s aesthetic at the beginning of his career in the 1930s and 1940s. José Antonio Arroyo dressed Rubén Olmo in a fitted short jacket with tasselled trim on the sleeves for his performance of *Taranto*.

Regarding the set design, the general approach involved **reusing existing elements** and creating audiovisual reproductions of the designs originally used by Antonio Ruiz Soler in his productions. The arches representing the palatial setting in which Antonio placed *Sonatas* are on loan from the Teatro Real. They belong to the set designed by Daniel Bianco for the production of *Las bodas de Fígaro*. The painted curtain featuring an idealised coat of arms of the halberdiers was replaced by a projection created by José Maldonado. The flamenco dancer and choreographer also designed other **audiovisual elements for *Estampas flamencas***, using the flamenco form featured in each piece as a common thread.

The *BNE al cole* educational project in Seville

Before the premiere of *Centenario Antonio Ruiz Soler* in Seville, the Ballet Nacional de España is holding **three educational workshops for children**

as part of its *BNE al cole* programme, which was launched in schools in Madrid and extended to other Spanish cities in 2020.

On this occasion, the Spanish dance workshops, coordinated by rehearsal director Maribel Gallardo and Belén Moreno, head of educational activities, are being held at cultural associations and community centres where cultural projects have been established as tools for social reintegration. **From Sunday 11th to Tuesday 13th April**, small groups of children aged between eight and twelve will take part in these activities at the **Centro San Miguel in the Barrio del Castillo district of Alcalá de Guadaíra, the Alalá Foundation in Seville's Polígono Sur district, and the Juan Antonio González Caraballo Torreblanca Community Centre in Seville**. The director of the Ballet Nacional de España, Rubén Olmo, will present the workshop at the Alalá Foundation on 12th April.

Participants will also receive the interactive booklet *Antonio Ruiz Soler para jóvenes*, the second publication in the informative #BNEnoscueta series launched by the Ballet Nacional de España in 2020. Published with the support of Acción Cultural Española (AC/E) and in collaboration with the Complutense University of Madrid, it aims to introduce younger generations to the life and artistic career of the Seville-born dancer and choreographer Antonio 'el Bailarín'. Through the #BNEnoscueta mobile application, readers can supplement the text with videos of Antonio Ruiz Soler's choreographies and 3D augmented-reality animations.

Centenario Antonio Ruiz Soler

Teatro de la Maestranza, Seville
15th and 16th April 2021
7:00 p.m.

About the Ballet Nacional de España

The Spanish National Ballet (BNE) has been Spain's leading public company for Spanish dance since it was founded in 1978 under the name Ballet Nacional Español, with Antonio Gades as its first director. It is one of the production units of the National Institute of the Performing Arts and Music (INAEM), which forms part of the Ministry of Culture and Sport. The BNE's mission is to preserve, promote and pass on Spain's rich choreographic heritage, embracing its stylistic diversity and traditions through its different forms: classical dance, stylised dance, folklore, escuela bolera and flamenco. It also works to bring Spanish dance closer to new audiences and strengthen its national and international profile within a framework of full artistic and creative autonomy.

Rubén Olmo, Director of the Ballet Nacional de España

Rubén Olmo, winner of the 2015 National Dance Award, joined the Ballet Nacional de España in September 2019 with the aim of preserving, promoting and expanding the reach of the traditional Spanish Dance repertoire, while also incorporating new creations and opening the company to avant-garde approaches and experimentation.



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Director
Rubén Olmo

This marks his second period with the BNE, having previously danced with the company from 1998 to 2002. From 2011, he served as director of the Ballet Flamenco de Andalucía, an institution belonging to the Regional Government of Andalusia, where he premiered his own productions, including *Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías* and *La muerte de un minotauro*. Before that, he founded his own company, for which he created productions such as *Érase una vez*, *Belmonte*, *Las tentaciones de Poe*, *Horas contigo*, *Naturalmente Flamenco* and *Diálogo de Navegante*. He has also worked as a choreographer and dancer with leading figures in Spanish Dance, including Aída Gómez, Antonio Najarro, Eva Yerbabuena, Víctor Ullate, Antonio Canales, Rafael Amargo, Isabel Bayón and Rafaela Carrasco.

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