

La Bella Otero and Antonio 'el Bailarín' take centre stage in the Ballet Nacional de España's two premieres for the 2020–2021 season

Madrid's Teatro de la Zarzuela will host the premiere of *La Bella Otero* in July 2021, a narrative work directed and choreographed by Rubén Olmo and based on the life of the Spanish Folies Bergère performer

In April, the BNE will premiere a programme devoted to Antonio Ruiz Soler at Seville's Teatro de la Maestranza, marking the centenary of his birth

The touring schedule for *Invocación*, the programme premiered on March 7th at the Festival de Jerez, will begin in Albacete on October 29th, 2020

Madrid, October 8th, 2020. The Ballet Nacional de España (BNE) begins its 2020/2021 season in October by resuming the tours postponed the previous spring due to COVID-19. **After seven months away from the stage, the company will present the programme *Invocación* at the Teatro Circo in Albacete on October 29th and 30th.** Premiered on March 7th at the Festival de Jerez, the programme comprises Rubén Olmo's *Invocación bolera* and *Jauleña*, Antonio Najarro's *Eterna Iberia* and *De lo flamenco. Homenaje a Mario Maya*. Following Albacete, it **will tour Pozuelo de Alarcón, Madrid; Terrassa, Barcelona; and Pamplona**, with further cities yet to be confirmed.

This season, Spain's public Spanish dance company **will also premiere Rubén Olmo's *La Bella Otero*; a new choreography for *Capricho español*, set to music by Rimsky-Korsakov; and the programme *Centenario de Antonio Ruiz Soler*, marking the centenary of the artist's birth.**

"Unfortunately, Antonio 'el Bailarín' has not received all the tributes he deserves," says Rubén Olmo, director of the Ballet Nacional de España. "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 was a genius and one of those figures in Spanish dance endowed with a very special charisma. Antonio was unique," he adds.

The Ballet Nacional de España regularly programmes key works by Antonio Ruiz Soler, particularly *Zapateado de Sarasate*, *Eritaña* and *El sombrero de tres picos*. In 2016, it even premiered *Homenaje a Antonio Ruiz Soler*, bringing together some of his most emblematic works. **What distinguishes the programme that the BNE will present on April 15th at Seville's Teatro de la Maestranza is the inclusion of *Sonatas*, set to music by Padre Soler. The work had not been performed in full since its premiere at Seville's Teatro Lope de Vega in 1982 and its subsequent**



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Director
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tour of Spain and the United States in 1983. "I wanted this escuela bolera work to be part of the centenary programme because it clearly reflects the influence of classical dance technique on Antonio's style. It has a perfect structure, like a classical ballet," explains Rubén Olmo.

The programme dedicated by the Ballet Nacional de España to Antonio 'el Bailarín', one of the artists who most profoundly influenced the development of Spanish dance and who died in 1996, also differs from previous tributes by presenting four new pieces inspired by his style, aesthetics and personality. **Under the title *Estampas flamencas*, Rubén Olmo and Miguel Ángel Corbacho, assistant director and former principal dancer of the BNE, have created choreographies that explore traditional flamenco from its origins**, both musically and through the costumes. It is a journey through the earliest forms of flamenco singing, dancing and guitar playing, encompassing the flamenco styles of zorongo, martinete, caracoles and sevillanas. "I believe he would have loved this interpretation of his style, which we have prepared for his centenary with such affection and respect," says the BNE's director.

The programme also includes the solo *Leyenda*, choreographed by Carlos Vilán to Isaac Albéniz's composition *Asturias*. Rubén Olmo decided to include this work because it was a regular feature in the repertoire of the companies directed by Antonio. Carlos Vilán also possesses extensive knowledge of the master's style, having worked with him while dancing as a principal dancer in María Rosa's company. Contrary to the customary practice in Antonio's company, Carlos Vilán's choreography will be performed by a female dancer.

The programme is completed by the solo that Antonio included in all his charity performances and which is undoubtedly one of his best-known pieces, *Zapateado de Sarasate*, together with *Fantasia galaica*, set to music by Ernesto Halffter. "Zapateado was his signature piece. We could not leave it out. And *Fantasia galaica*, based on Galician folklore, is a perfectly rounded work and even my personal favourite," says Rubén Olmo. "Nothing like it has been created since."

For these two choreographies, as well as *Sonatas*, the production will remain faithful to the originals. The BNE team is therefore studying the surviving audiovisual archive in order to reproduce as closely as possible the first versions of these works directed by Antonio. Only the set elements will be adapted so that the works can be performed together.

For the premiere of the ***Centenario Antonio Ruiz Soler*** programme on April 15th, 2021, at the Teatro de la Maestranza, the Ballet Nacional de España will be accompanied by the Royal Seville Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Manuel Coves.

La Bella Otero, a dramatic ballet set during the Belle Époque

The Ballet Nacional de España's second premiere of 2021 fulfils a dream Rubén Olmo had even before becoming a choreographer. It is a **narrative work recounting the life of the dancer and courtesan Carolina Otero, better known as La Bella Otero**. The fact that one of the most famous women of her time, at the end of the nineteenth century, came from a village in Pontevedra was what first captivated the Ballet Nacional de España's director when he discovered her story. From the outset, he knew that a large ballet company would be required to tell her story through dance, and leading the BNE gave him the opportunity he had desired for years.

His collaborators in this undertaking have been **playwright Gregor Acuña-Pohl**, who has researched everything written about La Bella Otero, including her memoirs, and musicians **Manuel Busto, Agustín Diassera, Diego Losada, Paul Vallet, Víctor Márquez and Rubén Díaz, together with the group Rarefolk, who have created the original score for the production**. "The music conveys the life of La Bella Otero and her era extremely well and, above all, it is highly emotional and passionate," says Rubén Olmo, who has designed a production encompassing **different dance styles, from stylised dance and flamenco to contemporary dance and folklore**, creating a fusion through which La Bella Otero's story can be told.

After being sexually assaulted during her adolescence, Carolina Otero fled her native village and achieved fame first in Portugal and later in New York as a singer and dancer, aided by the successive benefactors and lovers who helped advance her career until she eventually performed for many years at the Folies Bergère in Paris. She associated with kings and princes from across Europe, whom she seduced and abandoned, reportedly driving several of them to suicide. Her true passion, however, was gambling. She lost her jewellery and her entire fortune at the Monte Carlo casino and spent the final years of her life alone and destitute in a small flat in Nice, France.

In the words of **Rubén Olmo: "It will be a highly emotional, moving and dramatic production, because it is the story of a woman who invents her own origins in order to reach the very top, but ultimately ends up alone and forgotten."**

To perform the leading role, the Ballet Nacional de España has invited Patricia Guerrero, one of the foremost figures in the most avant-garde flamenco. She was a soloist with the Ballet Flamenco de Andalucía under Rubén Olmo's direction, although they had already worked together previously, and she now leads her own company. "She is a flamenco dancer who radiates tremendous strength on stage and possesses a very powerful magnetism. That is why I chose Patricia Guerrero for this role: she possesses the same qualities that made La Bella Otero so remarkable," explains Rubén Olmo.

Rehearsal director and former BNE principal dancer Maribel Gallardo will portray the protagonist in her later, retired years. "As well as being

a dancer, she is a wonderful actress. She has brought many characters to the stage and will do outstanding work. Her scenes are pivotal moments in the production," he adds.

The costumes will be another of the defining elements of *La Bella Otero*, whose scenes unfold in settings as varied as a Galician village, Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu, the Monte Carlo casino and the court of the Russian tsar, designed by set designer Eduardo Moreno. Designer **Yaiza Pinillos** has undertaken extensive research into the history of clothing during different periods, recreating everything from the garments worn by Galician peasants to the spectacular costumes of the Folies Bergère.

Madrid's Teatro de la Zarzuela will host the world premiere of *La Bella Otero* on July 7th, 2021. The Orchestra of the Community of Madrid, conducted by Manuel Busto, will be joined by Alejandro Cruz, Agustín Diassera, David Chupete, Rarefolk and the Ballet Nacional de España's flamenco musicians.

Ballet Nacional de España 2020/2021 Touring Schedule

October 29th–30th, 2020

Teatro Circo, Albacete

Invocación

December 16th, 2020

Dance Open Festival Gala

Oktyabrsky Theatre, St. Petersburg, Russia

Capricho español — world premiere

January 23rd–24th, 2021

Teatro Mira, Pozuelo de Alarcón, Madrid

Invocación

February 12th–14th, 2021

Centre Cultural Terrassa, Terrassa, Barcelona

Invocación

April 15th–16th, 2021

Teatro de la Maestranza, Seville

Centenario de Antonio Ruiz Soler — premiere

May 16th, 2021

Baluarte, Pamplona

Invocación

July 7th–18th, 2021

Teatro de la Zarzuela, Madrid

La Bella Otero — world premiere



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About the Ballet Nacional de España

The Ballet Nacional de España (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. 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.

Further information and interview requests:

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