

Ballet Nacional de España brings the pinnacle of Antonio Ruiz Soler's talent to Madrid's Teatro Real

The BNE will give four performances of Centenario Antonio Ruiz Soler from 13th to 16th October

The programme comprises Antonio's choreographies in stylised flamenco, folklore and escuela bolera, together with works by Rubén Olmo, Miguel Ángel Corbacho and Carlos Vilán inspired by his style

Madrid, 1st October 2021. Some lives wander in search of a destiny, while other destinies are marked out from the very beginning. In the case of Antonio Ruiz Soler, his destiny found him at the age of just four, in the streets of Seville, dancing to the music of a barrel organ, and from that moment he became Antonio 'el Bailarín'. At only twenty years of age, he achieved success throughout the Americas alongside Rosario. On returning to Spain, he poured his talent as a dancer, choreographer and director into dozens of choreographies and films until his retirement from the stage in 1979. In 1981, he succeeded Antonio Gades as director of the young Ballet Nacional de España, for which he staged around fifteen of his own choreographies. Until his death in 1996, he continued to make the most of his innate talent, advancing Spanish dance as few others have managed to do and leaving us extraordinary performances and choreographies worthy of his remarkable destiny.

To celebrate the centenary of his birth, **Rubén Olmo**, director of the Ballet Nacional de España, has devised the programme **Centenario Antonio Ruiz Soler**, bringing together faithful revivals of key works from his career alongside new creations inspired by his style, choreographed by Olmo himself, **Miguel Ángel Corbacho** and **Carlos Vilán**.

Premiered at Seville's Teatro de la Maestranza on 15th April, the Ballet Nacional de España will give four performances of the programme at **Madrid's Teatro Real** from **13th to 16th October**. The company will be accompanied by the **Madrid Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Manuel Coves**, with soprano **Carmen Solís** and cantaor **Juan José Amador "El Perre"** appearing as guest artists. On 5th October, the Teatro Real will release the tickets previously held back, allowing the venue to reach full capacity following the change in regulations in the Community of Madrid.

"Antonio transformed the way people danced and further elevated Spanish dance. He was also the most complete dancer, choreographer and director in its history," says Rubén Olmo. "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," he adds.

The choreographies by Antonio 'el Bailarín' selected for the programme are

Sonatas, Zapateado and Fantasía galaica. The three represent the pinnacle of his talent in three different styles: escuela bolera, flamenco stylisation and stylised folklore.

The first of these, *Sonatas*, reflects the influence of classical dance technique on Antonio's style. For this suite, he created a classical ballet structure for a bolero-style choreography set at an eighteenth-century royal court, the period in which the composer Padre Soler lived. The complete version of the work had not returned to the stage 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," says Rubén Olmo.

"Nor could we leave out *Zapateado* de Sarasate. It is perhaps the stylised flamenco solo that brought Antonio Ruiz Soler the greatest success, as well as many Spanish dance performers who later performed it. It was his signature piece," continues the director of the Ballet Nacional de España.

Fantasía galaica, set to music by Ernesto Halffter, is the ensemble piece 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. In this choreography, Antonio Ruiz Soler stylised Galician dances, technically reinterpreting their steps and enhancing their theatrical qualities by combining an almost balletic pas de deux with a final alborada evoking a traditional muñeira.

Rosario, the artist who accompanied Antonio from his earliest steps at Realito's academy in Seville until he founded his own company in 1953, is also present in this journey through Antonio Ruiz Soler's career. In *Vito de gracia*, Rubén Olmo has revived the number the pair performed in the 1944 film *Hollywood Canteen*.

The Ballet Nacional de España has sought to remain as faithful as possible to Antonio's original versions of these works. To achieve this, the company studied its audiovisual archive and recovered and adapted the original costumes from his 1980s productions. Set elements from other productions have also been reused. The arches representing the palatial setting in which Antonio placed *Sonatas* are on loan from the Teatro Real and belong to the set designed by Daniel Bianco for the production of *Las bodas de Fígaro*.

Other choreographies

The *Centenario Antonio Ruiz Soler* programme differs from previous tributes in that, under the title ***Estampas flamencas***, it presents choreographies created especially by Rubén Olmo and Miguel Ángel Corbacho, following the style and aesthetics of the flamenco productions Antonio staged during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. "We wanted to present a ***Martinete, Zorongo, Taranto*** and ***Caracoles*** that would evoke his figure for audiences," explains Rubén Olmo.

In this respect, the costumes worn by the female dancers in *Caracoles* reflect 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. *Martinete*, meanwhile—a flamenco form traditionally reserved exclusively for singing and first danced by Antonio—emphasises the restraint of male dancing in traditional flamenco. The shirts with flowing sleeves tied at the waist, designed by López de Santos, recreate Antonio’s aesthetic at the beginning of his career in the 1930s and 1940s. This contrasts with the audiovisual scenery projected onto the stage, created by José Maldonado and inspired by each flamenco form.

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. 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.

Antonio Ruiz Soler for Young People

With the same aim of introducing younger audiences to Antonio’s life and professional career during the centenary year of his birth, the Ballet Nacional de España has published the **interactive booklet *Antonio Ruiz Soler para jóvenes***. Published with the support of Acción Cultural Española (AC/E) and in collaboration with the Complutense University of Madrid, it is the second issue in the #BNEoscueta series of educational publications launched by the Ballet Nacional de España in 2020.

Written by **Elna Matamoros**, ballet mistress at the Ballet Nacional de España, the publication includes images by photographer Juan Gyenes, a prominent witness to Spain’s social and artistic life during the 1950s and 1960s. The selection features studio and stage photographs, as well as private images and photographs taken during journeys and tours. Through the #BNEoscueta mobile application, readers can also complement the text with 3D augmented-reality animations and videos of Antonio Ruiz Soler’s choreographies performed by the Ballet Nacional de España: ***El sombrero de tres picos (Farruca del molinero)***, ***La taberna del toro (Taranto)*** and ***Zapateado***.

Augmented reality enables young people to see Antonio ‘el Bailarín’ dancing on their mobile devices. Instead of relying solely on black-and-white footage of his performances, The Role studio, in collaboration with the Complutense University of Madrid, developed **3D animations** specifically for this publication **based on three of his most outstanding choreographies: *Martinete*, *Zapateado (Bis)* and *Sonatas (Variation)***. The university provided the motion-capture suit used to record the movements of two Ballet Nacional de España dancers, **José Manuel Benítez and Cristian García, who bring the animated figure of Antonio Ruiz Soler to life**. Principal dancer **Francisco Velasco** lent his voice and likeness to another animated character, who introduces the figure of Antonio Ruiz Soler.

Rehearsal director **Maribel Gallardo** also collaborated in the production of the booklet, recording the castanet performance heard in *Sonatas*, while first dancer **Sergio García** advised on correcting the animated figure’s movements so that they reproduced the choreography as accurately as possible.

The publication is also available in an easy-to-read version to ensure cognitive accessibility.

Download:

<https://balletnacional.mcu.es/es/recursos/programas-de-mano/bnenoscuenta-antoniruizsoler.pdf/>

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.

Images

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