

Ballet Nacional de España opens the 2021/2022 season in Murcia by celebrating the genius of Antonio Ruiz Soler

The Auditorio Víctor Villegas in Murcia will host the only performance of Centenario Antonio Ruiz Soler on 7th October

The programme comprises four choreographies in different styles created by Antonio, together with two further works inspired by his artistic legacy

Murcia, 6th October 2021. On 4th November 2021, Antonio Ruiz Soler, better known as **Antonio 'el Bailarín'**, would have celebrated his **100th birthday**. To commemorate the dancer, choreographer and director who most profoundly shaped the development of Spanish dance—and to mark the 25th anniversary of his death—the Ballet Nacional de España, directed by **Rubén Olmo**, has created a programme bringing together four choreographies that represent the height of Antonio's talent and two further works that follow in the footsteps of his distinctive style.

The only performance of ***Centenario Antonio Ruiz Soler*** will take place on **7th October at the Auditorio Víctor Villegas in Murcia**, opening the Ballet Nacional de España's 2021/2022 season. The music, composed by **Ernesto Halffter, Isaac Albéniz, Pablo Sarasate** and **Padre Soler**, among others, will be performed live by the **Region of Murcia Symphony Orchestra**, conducted by **Manuel Coves**.

"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.

The programme premiered at Seville's Teatro de la Maestranza on 15th April. The selected choreographies by Antonio, who directed the Ballet Nacional de España between 1980 and 1983, are ***Sonatas, Zapateado, Fantasía galaica*** and ***Vito de gracia***. The first three represent the height of his talent in three different styles: *escuela bolera*, flamenco stylisation and stylised folklore. The fourth is a pas de deux that Antonio performed with Rosario in the 1944 film *Hollywood Canteen*.

For Rubén Olmo, *Sonatas* reflects the influence of classical dance technique on Antonio's style, as he created a classical ballet structure for this bolero-style choreography. 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. Nor could we leave out *Zapateado*. It is perhaps the stylised flamenco solo that brought Antonio Ruiz Soler the greatest success," says the director. "*Fantasía galaica* is one of my favourite works by Antonio because I believe it is perfectly rounded. Nothing like it has been created since," he concludes.

The Ballet Nacional de España has sought to remain as faithful as possible to the original versions premiered by Antonio. To achieve this, the company studied its audiovisual archive and recovered and adapted the original costumes from Antonio's 1980s productions, which he had donated to the Ballet Nacional de España and which had been preserved ever since. For the set design, the company commissioned audiovisual projections from artist and flamenco dancer **José Maldonado** and reused scenic elements from other productions. The **Teatro Real** has loaned the palatial arches used in *Sonatas*, designed by **Daniel Bianco** for the production of *Las bodas de Fígaro*.

What distinguishes this programme from previous tributes is that these key works from Antonio's career are joined by creations inspired by his style: ***Estampas flamencas***, by **Rubén Olmo** and **Miguel Ángel Corbacho**, and **Carlos Vilán's *Leyenda "Asturias"***. 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. *Estampas flamencas*, meanwhile, explores traditional flamenco from its origins, both musically and through its costumes, through the flamenco styles frequently featured in Antonio's work: zorongo, martinete, taranto and caracoles. "Taken as a whole, it is a very complete programme that will appeal to lovers of the most classical forms of Spanish dance," says Rubén Olmo.

Inclusive Spanish dance

As part of the educational activities organised by the Ballet Nacional de España alongside its performances, last Monday, 4th October, the company held a **workshop for a group of children and young people from the Murcia Association for People with Down Syndrome (ASSIDO)**, a member of Plena Inclusión Región de Murcia.

Dance is a proven therapeutic tool that supports the development of social skills and physical, psychological and cognitive abilities. The children took part in the *Bailando un tesoro* workshop at the association's headquarters in Casillas, Murcia, led by **Maribel Gallardo** and **Belén Moreno**. The two members of the BNE's educational team introduced them to Spanish dance through its costumes, handclapping, footwear and castanets.

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.

High-resolution images

<https://balletnacional.mcu.es/es/sala-de-prensa>

Further information and interview requests

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