

Ballet Nacional de España pays tribute to Mario Maya, the creator who transformed flamenco

- 'De lo flamenco. Homenaje a Mario Maya' is one of the works featured in Invocación, a programme that will be performed at Madrid's Teatro de la Zarzuela from 10th to 22nd December
- The programme is completed by three choreographies showcasing the richness and diversity of Spanish dance: Rubén Olmo's Invocación bolera and Jauleña, and Antonio Najarro's Eterna Iberia

Madrid, 30th November 2021. "Art is evolution; otherwise, it is not art. But in order to evolve, as in every art form, it is essential to possess a strong foundation in tradition." Until his death in 2008, dancer, choreographer and director **Mario Maya** served as a bridge between traditional and contemporary flamenco. His creativity and working methods inspired a generation of flamenco artists who are now among the leading figures in the art form, and his influence remains present in productions performed on stages today.

As a tribute **to the artist who transformed the aesthetics and concept of flamenco**—one of the pioneers in telling stories and portraying the Andalusian people through movement—the Ballet Nacional de España includes **De lo flamenco** in its **Invocación** programme. The production was premiered by the Compañía Andaluza de Danza, now the Ballet Flamenco de Andalucía, in 1994. *Invocación*, the programme that closed the Festival de Jerez on 7th April 2020, will be performed at **Madrid's Teatro de la Zarzuela from 10th to 22nd December**, with live music by the **Orchestra of the Community of Madrid**, conducted by **Manuel Busto**.

"I believe Mario Maya would be very pleased to see his work included in the Ballet Nacional de España, a company he dreamed of directing," explains **Rubén Olmo, director of the Ballet Nacional de España**. "His repertoire is particularly well suited to the BNE because he choreographed for large groups of dancers. I chose the suite *De lo flamenco* for this tribute because I believe it is one of the freshest ballets Mario Maya created. It presents a very broad range of flamenco styles, from classicism to baroque exuberance and the avant-garde, and reflects his knowledge, the originality of his choreography and his remarkable musical sensitivity," he adds.

Born in Córdoba in 1937 and raised in Granada's Sacromonte district, Mario Maya, winner of the 1992 National Dance Award, made his debut at the age of thirteen with Manolo Caracol and trained artistically with Pilar López's ballet company. Following his time in New York during the 1960s, where he absorbed new trends and contemporary theatre, he focused on finding new forms of expression in flamenco rooted in tradition. As well as being one of the most important flamenco artists, he was a highly cultured man concerned with the social issues of his time and those affecting the Romani

community. For him, innate feeling and talent were as important as study, and he wanted flamenco dancers not merely to perform footwork but also to acquire the cultural education needed to become complete artists. He sought to elevate choreography through dramaturgy, music and costumes without ever losing sight of emotion.

Rubén Olmo wanted the Ballet Nacional de España's production of *De lo flamenco* to resemble as closely as possible the original premiered by Mario Maya while he was directing the Compañía Andaluza de Danza. To achieve this, he received the support of **Mariana Ovalle**, the artist's widow and president of the Mario Maya Foundation, together with the collaboration of Diego Carrasco, who composed the original score; choreographer **Manolo Marín**, creator of one of the suite's pieces, *Los cinco toreros*; **Manuel Betanzos**, rehearsal director for Mario Maya's company; and **Patricio Hidalgo**, painter and scholar of Maya's work. Every detail of the original production has been carefully reproduced, including the hand-painted costumes designed by Mario Maya for *De lo flamenco*, recreated by **Juan Andrés Amaya**.

The production now presented by the Ballet Nacional de España differs from the original in two choreographies commissioned from two other collaborators of Mario Maya, **Isabel Bayón** and **Rafaela Carrasco**. Bayón, who was a principal dancer in Mario Maya's company, has created *Taranto* especially for principal dancer **Esther Jurado**. Manuela Carrasco, meanwhile, is credited with *Romance del emplazado*, set to verses by García Lorca.

The Ballet Nacional de España's production of *De lo flamenco* adds three pieces to the original choreography by Mario Maya, Milagros Menjíbar and A. Rueda "Toná": **Manolo Marín's** *Los cinco toreros* and two new works created by two of Mario Maya's regular collaborators, **Rafaela Carrasco's** *Romance del emplazado* and **Isabel Bayón's** *Taranto*. Inspired by the soleá of the same title that Mario Maya choreographed especially for Israel Galván, Bayón has sought to preserve the master's essence and style, reviving his steps while giving the piece a more contemporary atmosphere.

The Ballet Nacional de España's flamenco ensemble, accompanied by three guest cantaores, will perform live the music composed by **Diego Carrasco**, **Jesús Torres**, **Moraíto Chico** and **Los del Río**.

A comprehensive overview of Spanish dance styles

De lo flamenco. Homenaje a Mario Maya occupies the entire second half of the *Invocación* programme, which opens with one of the few recent *escuela bolera* choreographies, **Rubén Olmo's** *Invocación bolera*. "I felt it was important for the Ballet Nacional de España to have an ensemble *escuela bolera* choreography, because the repertoire contains only one, Mariemma's *Danza y tronío*, while the others are choreographies for one or two dancers. To create *Invocación bolera*, I drew on the great masters of *escuela bolera* and on what my own teachers taught me, but the result is a highly personal

escuela bolera choreography with a contemporary style,” says the choreographer.

The music for *Invocación bolera* is an original contemporary composition commissioned by the Ballet Nacional de España from the young Seville-born composer and conductor **Manuel Busto**. The costumes were designed by **Pedro Moreno** for *Fandango del Padre Soler*, premiered by the Ballet Nacional de España in 1988, and have been adapted for this work by the designer himself.

Manuel Busto also composed the music for *Jauleña*, a transitional solo created by Rubén Olmo that explores the possibilities of combining contemporary dance, stylised dance and flamenco. Musically, flamenco forms the basis of a piece divided into two sections: a granaína, in which the cello takes the solo role, and a zapateado, in which flamenco guitars and percussion form part of the orchestra.

The programme is completed by **Antonio Najarro’s *Eterna Iberia***, one of the purest examples of stylised Spanish dance choreographed for the Ballet Nacional de España in 2019. The cape and Cordoban hat, enhanced by **Yaiza Pinillos’s** costume designs, take centre stage in a ballet that revives the score composed by **Manuel Moreno-Buendía** for Antonio Ruiz Soler’s *Eterna Castilla*, subsequently published as a suite under the title *Celtiberia*.

“*Invocación* is a very complete programme in which audiences can enjoy flamenco filled with life and energy on stage, a ballet representing the purest form of stylised dance and one of the few recent *escuela bolera* choreographies,” says Rubén Olmo.

Invocación Ballet Nacional de España

Programme:

Invocación bolera, by Rubén Olmo

Jauleña, by Rubén Olmo

Eterna Iberia, by Antonio Najarro

De lo flamenco. Homenaje a Mario Maya, by Mario Maya, Milagros Menjíbar, A.

Rueda “Toná”, Manolo Marín, Isabel Bayón and Rafaela Carrasco

**Teatro de la Zarzuela, Madrid
10th–22nd December, 8:00 p.m.**

Sundays at 6:00 p.m.

No performances on Mondays.

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.

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