

## Athens: *Invocación's* first international tour of the 2022–2023 season

On 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> September, the Ballet Nacional de España presented a four-part programme at the Odeon of Herodes Atticus in Athens. Devised by its director, Rubén Olmo, the programme showcased the dancers' versatility and technical mastery across three disciplines of Spanish dance.

"*Invocación* is a highly comprehensive 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," said the BNE's director.

*Invocación* opens with Rubén Olmo's contemporary approach to escuela bolera in *Invocación bolera*, featuring music by composer and conductor Manuel Busto and castanet choreography by Maribel Gallardo, recipient of the 2021 Gold Medal of Merit in the Fine Arts. This is one of the most technically demanding disciplines of Spanish dance, requiring mastery of classical ballet, while also being one of the most spectacular because of the speed of its steps and jumps. The choreography pays tribute to the great masters who shaped the development of the style, filtered through Rubén Olmo's highly personal vision. The costumes, designed by Pedro Moreno, were recovered from the Ballet's archives and adapted for this work by the designer himself.

This is followed by *Jauleña*, a solo by the company's director that displays the full range of his choreographic language, weaving together contemporary forms of expression and flamenco-inspired movements, with particular emphasis on zapateado and granaína. The music is once again by Manuel Busto.

To close the first half of the programme, the company takes to the stage in Yaiza Pinillos's earth- and sea-toned costumes to perform *Eterna Iberia*, a stylised dance work choreographed by Antonio Najarro. Premiered in 2019, the piece incorporates traditional elements of Spanish dance, such as the cape and the Cordoban hat, across five movements of contrasting character. The music was originally composed in 1963 by Manuel Moreno-Buendía for Antonio Ruiz Soler's ballet *Eterna Castilla* and was later published as a suite under the title *Celtiberia*.

After the interval, the Ballet Nacional de España's flamenco ensemble of cantaores and musicians joins the dancers on stage to pay tribute to Mario Maya, one of the flamenco dancers and choreographers who transformed flamenco dance in Andalusia. A leading figure in Spanish dance, renowned for his brilliance and sensitivity, Maya died in 2008. With *De lo flamenco. Homenaje a Mario Maya*, the Ballet Nacional de España explores the creative

world of the Granada-born artist for the first time, filling a significant gap in its repertoire. Rubén Olmo selected this production, premiered in 1994 by the Compañía Andaluza de Danza, which Maya directed, because its stylisation and movement refreshed the way flamenco was created and experienced on stage, particularly when performed by a large company of dancers. "Even today, it remains innovative and completely different from anything else," says the director.

The Ballet's production of *De lo flamenco* adds two new choreographies to the original works by Mario Maya, Milagros Menjíbar, A. Rueda "Toná" and Manolo Marín. They were created by two of Mario Maya's regular collaborators: Rafaela Carrasco and Isabel Bayón, who choreographed *Romance del emplazado* and *Taranto*, respectively. Artists who were part of the original cast also contributed to the revival, including rehearsal director Manuel Betanzos and musician Diego Carrasco, one of the composers of the songs alongside Jesús Torres, Moraíto Chito and Los del Río. The costumes are replicas of Mario Maya's original designs and were hand-painted by Juan Andrés Amaya.

The Ballet Nacional de España premiered *Invocación* in 2020 and has since performed it in Madrid, Valencia, Pamplona, Albacete, Santander, Zaragoza, St Petersburg, Dubai, Logroño, Torrejón de Ardoz, Toledo and Granada, among other cities.

## **Invocación**

### **Ballet Nacional de España**

### **Odeon of Herodes Atticus**

### **Athens, Greece**

**18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> September 2022, 9:30 p.m.**

#### 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



MINISTERIO  
DE CULTURA  
Y DEPORTE



**BALLET NACIONAL  
DE ESPAÑA**

Director  
**Rubén Olmo**

## 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 to 2013, 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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