

La Bella Otero comes to the Granada Festival

The Ballet Nacional de España presents La Bella Otero at the Teatro del Generalife, opening the dance programme of the Granada Festival

Granada, 23rd June 2023. Following its return from Colombia, the Ballet Nacional de España will present *La Bella Otero* this weekend at the Teatro del Generalife, once again featuring Granada-born dancer Patricia Guerrero as guest artist, with a special appearance by Maribel Gallardo.

Rubén Olmo has placed dance at the service of the story, blending styles ranging from folklore to flamenco and stylised dance to tell, through movement, the story of a woman who reinvented herself following a traumatic event in her childhood, achieved success as an artist and courtesan, and ultimately lost her fortune through gambling.

"I have often said that, many years ago, before I had even begun my career as a choreographer, I found some postcards of La Bella Otero in a second-hand shop. When I discovered that one of the most famous women of her time came from a small village in Pontevedra, I knew I had to create a ballet about her life. But I also knew that I would need the support of a major company to realise it as I imagined it, as a large-scale production. Directing the Ballet Nacional de España has allowed me to make it a reality," explains Rubén Olmo of the origins of his choreography.

The narrative, dramatised by **Gregor Acuña-Pohl**, selects some of the most significant moments from the artist's life that could be expressed through dance, without attempting to provide an exhaustive account. "I have tried to remain faithful to the historical figure and create a ballet that moves audiences without judging her. The most important thing for me was to portray someone with tremendous magnetism, charisma and strength."

Granada-born dancer **Patricia Guerrero**, who returns home for these performances, is also thrilled to take on the role once again following her most recent appearance in Bogotá last November. "It is a role I am passionate about and one that brings me so many positive things. I am portraying a remarkable woman whom I admire in many ways, and I greatly value the opportunity to play her." The dancer and choreographer trained with the companies of Mario Maya and Rubén Olmo. She is now a leading figure in avant-garde flamenco and received the 2021 National Dance Award for Performance. According to Patricia Guerrero, "***La Bella Otero*** is a work with a harsh underlying story, but it is also dynamic, entertaining and fresh, with a colour and energy that will allow all of us, both on stage and in the audience, to enjoy it."

To portray the protagonist in her later years, Rubén Olmo has enlisted the special collaboration of **Maribel Gallardo**, rehearsal director at the Ballet Nacional de España. "Returning to the role of Madame Otero, beyond the experience of stepping into the shoes of such a fascinating woman despite her tragic life, also means reliving the thrill of being on stage and feeling the warmth of the audience. Sadly, a dancer's performing career is very short, and life rarely offers you an opportunity like the one I am fortunate enough to be experiencing now, with intensity and gratitude," says the Cádiz-born dancer.

The music for this operatic ballet was created by composer and conductor **Manuel Busto**, who coordinated the musicians from different genres involved in the score, integrating their contributions into the symphonic work he composed.

The remaining music for the production was composed by **Alejandro Cruz Benavides, Agustín Diassera, the group Rarefolk**, and flamenco guitarists **Diego Losada, Víctor Márquez, Enrique Bermúdez** and **Pau Vallet**.

Alongside the creation of such a complex and varied score, another of the challenges posed by this dramatic ballet was designing the nearly 200 costume designs needed to dress the dancers for periods and settings as diverse as a Galician village, Belle Époque Paris and a café cantante. Canary Islands-born designer **Yaiza Pinillos** is particularly proud of her personal reinterpretation of the Byzantine-inspired jewelled dress worn by La Bella Otero in one of her most iconic portraits. The difficulty of designing costumes that evoke a particular period while allowing the dancers to move and change easily between scenes was compounded by the wigs, beards, moustaches and hats required to characterise the different figures.

For set designer **Eduardo Moreno**, the challenge was to create a single architectural structure that, with only a few additional elements, could establish the time and location of each scene. **Juan Gómez-Cornejo's** lighting design, meanwhile, envelops the dancers and brings an emotional dimension to each setting.

Since its premiere at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid in 2021, **La Bella Otero** has also toured to Seville, Albacete, Málaga, Lorca and Bogotá. It premieres in Granada today and will be presented in Oviedo at the end of next week.



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**BALLET NACIONAL
DE ESPAÑA**

Programme

LA BELLA OTERO

Granada Festival
Teatro del Generalife

23rd and 24th June 2023, 10:30 p.m.

Tickets:

<https://granadafestival.janto.es/>

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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