

The Ballet Nacional de España presents *La Bella Otero* in Logroño

Since its premiere at Madrid's Teatro de la Zarzuela, *La Bella Otero* has been presented in eight cities as part of several national and international tours

Patricia Guerrero returns to the role of Carolina Otero for the production's presentation at Riojafórum in Logroño

Logroño, 2nd February 2024. ***La Bella Otero*** comes to the Palacio de Congresos y Auditorio de La Rioja following a highly successful previous season. This time, the production will be presented for one night only, on 3rd February, with the Ballet Nacional de España joined by **Patricia Guerrero** and featuring a special appearance by **Maribel Gallardo**, both of whom will portray the leading character at different stages of her life.

La Bella Otero can be regarded as an "operatic ballet" in the broadest sense of the term. It is a large-scale production, both in terms of the number of dancers and its extensive costumes, which recreate the world of *Belle Époque Paris*, as well as in the dramaturgical development of the story.

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 village in Pontevedra, I immediately knew that I had to create a ballet about her life. However, I also knew that I would need the support of a major company to realise it as I had imagined it: as a large-scale production. Directing the Ballet Nacional de España has enabled 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.”

Dancer **Patricia Guerrero** is delighted to return to the role following her previous performance. “I am very aware of where I am and of the enormous responsibility that comes with my character. Taking on this challenge is bringing out one hundred per cent of me. There are no surviving recordings of her movement or artistic expression, so Otero’s dance in this production will be my own dance.”

She is currently a leading figure in avant-garde flamenco, received the National Dance Award for Performance in 2021 and, at the end of 2023, was appointed the new director of the Ballet Flamenco de Andalucía. 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 once again 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 musicians from a range of genres and integrated their compositions into the symphonic score he created.

The remaining compositions featured in the production were written 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 costumes required 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 costume worn by *La Bella Otero* in one of her most iconic portraits. In addition to the challenge of designing costumes that evoke a historical period while allowing the dancers

to move and change quickly between scenes, the characterisation also required the use of wigs, beards, moustaches and hats.

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

Since its premiere at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid in 2021, **La Bella Otero** has toured to Seville, Albacete, Málaga, Lorca, Bogotá, Granada and Oviedo, and was most recently presented at Teatros del Canal in Madrid last December.

La Bella Otero
BALLET NACIONAL DE ESPAÑA

Programme:

LA BELLA OTERO
Palacio de Congresos and Auditorio
La Rioja — RIOJAFORUM

Saturday, 3rd February 2024, 8:00 p.m.

Tickets:

<https://riojaforum.com/evento/ballet-nacional-de-espaa/21871e75-49aa-e478-0f50-4d509605c5ef>

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.

Download high-resolution images:

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

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