

Havana: the world's ballet capital as of Sunday



Havana, October 27 (RHC)-- The 26th International Ballet Festival Alicia Alonso kicked off at Havana's Grand Theater on Sunday, October 28th, the day when 70 years ago the Cuban National Ballet Company was created.

That day the company's legendary dancer, choreographer and director Alicia Alonso, along with cofounders Fernando and Alberto Alonso, set a milestone in dance on the Caribbean island, creating the famous National Ballet School of Cuba as an aesthetic and stylistic phenomenon. The festival also celebrates the 75th anniversary of Alonso's debut in *Giselle* at the Metropolitan Opera House, marking the beginning of her successful career and planting the seed of ballet in Cuba.

Several companies and dancers are on hand at the important dance festival held every two years, including Camila Bocca, Macarena Gómez, Maximiliano Iglesias, Juan Pablo Ledo and Herman Piquín from Argentina; Rainer Krenstetter from Austria; Brazil's Leticia Calvete and Jhonny Almeida; Colombia's Oscar Chacón and Fernando Montaña; Hee Seo from South Korea; Alban Lendorf, Sebastian Kloborg and Ask la Cour from Denmark; Aran Bell, Cory Stearns, Elisabeth Beyer, Daniel Ulbricht, Rasta Thomas, Teresa Reichlen, Sterling Hyltin, Tiler Kalyn Peck, Isabella Boylston, Joseph Gatti and Danielle Diniz from the United States; Spain's Gonzalo García, Joaquín de Luz and María Juncal; Russia's María Kochetkova; Julie Charlet, Indiana Woodard and Florient Cador from France; Lauretta Summerscales from the UK; Italy's Pietra Conti; Altanthuyag Dugaraa and Anujin Otgontuggs from Mongolia; Valeria

Alavez from Mexico; Ukraine's Antonina Skobina and Denys Drozdyuk; and Mary Carmen Catoya and Karina González from Venezuela. Joining the guests is a group of dancers trained at the Cuban National Ballet School who are performing in different companies in the world.

Guest companies:

Grand Theater of Geneva Ballet, Switzerland:

With Philippe Cohen as manager since 2003, it seeks original, audacious, ambitious and modern artistic creations. The ensemble invites young choreographers to work with it and give it a more contemporary boost that doesn't break with the past. The Grand Theater of Geneva Ballet also looks into the future and is proud of having served as a launching pad for artists destined to become today's star choreographers, including Saburo Teshigawara, Benjamin Millepied, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Andonis Foniadakis, Emanuel Gat, Gilles Jobin and Ken Ossola. It performed in Cuba 1986 as a guest of Havana's International Ballet Festival that year.

Prague's National Ballet Theater, Czech Republic:

Founded in 1883, it's the oldest and most prestigious dance company in the central European country. Over the past seven years it's been artistically directed by Petr Zuska, opening up new styles and consolidating its international prestige.

Spain's Antonio Gades Foundation:

Set up in 2004, it's a private institution that safeguards the funds and archives of Antonio Gades. Based on the repertoire of the legendary Spanish choreographer and 'bailaor', at present the company is made up of various generations of performers that make it possible to directly pass the guidelines of Gades' school and style on to the new generations, including an aesthetic refined language, rooted in the traditions and culture of the Spanish people. Artistically directed by Stella Arauzo, who for years was Gades' dancing partner on the stage, the company is technically directed by Dominique You, the Spanish bailaor's right hand and the lighting artist of many of his pieces. Though open to change, the troupe is today composed by people who worked with the maestro for a long time, helping the new dancers to delve into his aesthetic and ethical philosophy applied to dance. The company named after Gades is still one of the corner stones of Spanish and flamenco dance. During Havana's 26th International Ballet Festival Alicia Alonso it will offer a didactical Spanish dance program titled 'From the point to the heel' at Martí Theater.

Rafael Amargo Company, Spain:

Rafael Amargo, whose real name is Jesús Rafael García Hernández, was born in Granada in 1975. He made his professional debut at the age of 16 at the Lola Flores Company, dancing on the best 'tablaos' in Madrid and the best dance companies in Spain. In 1997 Amargo premiered his first show, *La Guerra y el Ángel* (the War and the Angel), in Madrid's Fine Art Club. As of that moment it has premiered 13 productions. His shows have been to prestigious festivals and theaters from all over the world and he has received various awards as a dancer and choreographer. For the Cuban National Ballet Amargo created the show *Con el tiempo* (With Time) staged for the first time at the Albéniz Theater in the Spanish capital during the Cuban company tour of Spain in 2002. The same year he performed in Cuba as a guest of Havana's 18th International Ballet Festival. This year he and his company are performing the show *Dionisios, La vid ... y mil noches* (Dionysius, the grapevine ... and the Arabian Nights).

Danish Dance Theater, Denmark:

Founded in 1981 by Randi Patterson, an English-Norwegian choreographer and dance innovator, the Danish Dance Theatre is Denmark's largest modern dance company based in Copenhagen. Since April,

2018, Pontus Lidberg is the troupe's artistic director and, as of 2001, it's made up of dancers from different parts of the world. During the ensemble's first years, stories and literary sources often played a central role in the inspiration and creations of the company, which has frequently cooperated with renowned writers, visual artists and composers. Music scores have included classical master pieces, jazz, rock and different contemporary musical trends. Its repertoire includes big stage productions at the Royal Danish Theater, and also national and international tours.

Stars of American Ballet, USA:

A group made up of valuable North American dancers, coming from renowned companies, such as the New York City Ballet and others. In 2016, they performed in Cuba as guests of the 25th International Ballet Festival of Havana.

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