

flamenco news



Peña Flamenca de Londres • Summer 2019 • £3



2019 Festival All-Star Review Special

including:

sara baras • jesus carmona
eduardo guerrero • rocio molina
miguel poveda • mercedes ruíz
maría terremoto • lbert quesada
& zoltán vakulya

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Lourdes Fernández

Cover photo: Santana de Yepes • Inside covers: Steve Carr

saludos

The Peña Flamenca de Londres is a convivial meeting place for all aficionados. It follows the tradition of a typical Spanish peña in providing good flamenco at a reasonable price in a friendly atmosphere. We stage professional shows several times a year with artists resident in the UK or visiting from abroad.

At Juergas three times a year we provide an opportunity with professional backing for solo or group performance, or with a performer's own music if required. On professional nights a "spot" or a quick burst of sevillanas before the show, can be arranged. It's "a family affair" too: the children of long-time supporters are now taking the stage themselves... The Peña Flamenca de Londres was founded in 1984 and is run by an elected committee of volunteers. It is honoured to have as President world-renowned flamenco guitarist Paco Peña. For monthly updates join our email list: info@flamenco-london.org.uk

location and dates

Church Hall of the Church of the Holy Apostles, Cumberland Street (Lupus Street end) SW1V 4LY. Tube: Victoria or Pimlico. Buses C10, 360, 24. Dates: second Sunday in month but not January, July or August (or the April Feria).

how to join

Through website flamenco-london.org.uk, pick up a form at Admissions at peña, by post to membership secretary, Steve Carr, 26 Baronsmere Road London N2 or email info@flamenco-london.org.uk.

committee

Chair: Clive Crawford. Treasurer: David MacMurray. Publicity: Yumi Whyte, Steve Carr. Membership secretary, website and photos: Steve Carr. Event co-ordinator: Caroline Wolff. Minutes: Ladan Sheybani. Editor Flamenco News: Vera King. Catering: Magdalena Kurantowicz. Also elected: Mauricio Piga, Alan Haigh.

submission guidelines

Please submit text with all paragraph returns, special characters and accents. Submit scanned images at 300dpi, and digital photographs as maximum-size original files. (JPEG or TIFF). Please also include photographer credits and Who-Where-When captions.

One full page of type = approximately 550 words.max.

contact details

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Flamenco News is the magazine of the Peña Flamenca de Londres

peña membership details

The Membership Fee of £24 pa is payable at the door, or online at:
www.flamenco-london.org.uk

admission

Members. Special shows £10. Monthly shows/juergas £5. No charge for Juerga performers.
Non Members. Special shows £15. Monthly shows £12. Juergas £10.
Juerga performers £5 (refundable if joining on the night).

editorial

What a summer it has been! The weather held a few surprises, as hot or even hotter in some cases, than Spain. Though it has cooled off now!

The big event of course was the Sadler's Wells flamenco festival, held in July this year instead of February/March. Audiences dispersing outside discussed the date change. Great idea, was one point of view: summer weather gave it more of a Spanish atmosphere. If you have a view on this, let us know and we will pass it on.

Headline performer was Sara Baras, whom London audiences first took to their hearts back in 1999 (see page 12) London party-giver par excellence Ron Hitchins gave a party for her at his home – and here she is, pictured in the former flamenco magazine Flamenco International. There was a party on subsequent visits too.

On first night this year Ron decided wait at the Stage Door to see if the artists would appear. He was there only seconds when he was swept upstairs to where the artists, including Sara, were having supper.... And delighted to see him.

For festival coverage see Pages 11-18.

There were many more fringe events this year, at the Lilian Baylis studio (pages 8-10) and Rich Mix (Pages 16/17)

We attempted to arrange an interview with singer Miguel Poveda but it fell through at the last minute. Ah Well! Such is flamenco!

Overall, the festival was fast and furious, the footwork of one of the dancers – Jesús Carmona I think – actually blurred being so fast that the human eye could not keep up....

The next Big Thing is the Peña's Annual Meeting. It is on September 8, 6pm (see Page 20). This is an important occasion. Come along and make your voice heard, or even say Well done! We very much need a couple more committee members too. It does not take up a lot of time when there are enough of us. But at the moment there aren't enough of us.

Membership:
If anyone has joined or renewed their membership on the web page using Paypal but have not received a membership card or magazine please contact Steve Carr who will sort this out for you:
steve@flamenco-london.org.uk.

Vera King



sara baras

news from spain

It was sad when El Patio Sevillano on Seville's Avenida de Las Razas closed a few years ago. The lovely old courtyard in the port area was once the lively tablao venue where El Farruco, Matilde Coral and Manuela Vargas

made their names. The patio is now set to be turned into a theatre and dance venue again, so is ready for flamenco to return.

He departed this world 27 years ago yet new recordings of Camarón de la Isla are still emerging. Another gem has been unearthed, this time the entire live concert the singer did with guitarist Chicuelo at Montreux jazz festival in 1991. A few months before his death, the singer clearly appears in poor health, yet there are some beautiful numbers on this 24-track video and CD.

The triumph of the right-wing in Spain's local elections earlier this year has resulted in the reversal of decisions by predecessor socialist-run local authorities to rid their cities of streets named after Franco and his fascist henchmen. An unfortunate victim of this about-turn has been the decision of the new administration



camarón and chicuelo

in Córdoba to change Avenida Flamenco back to its former name of Avenida Conde deVallellano. Vallellano's role in the Franco government during the war was to close Spain's borders

to thousands of Jewish people fleeing the Nazi occupation of France.

A team from the Department of Mathematics at Seville University has developed a computer algorithm which analyses the unique melodic patterns of all the flamenco palos. They appear to have a mathematical formula for the duende, somehow taking the magic out of it.

Farewell singer Fernando Carrasco Vargas 'Fernando de la Morena' who has died in his home town of Jerez de la Frontera aged 74. The Sultán de la Bulería, as he was known, was also a master of fandangos and taranto. You can see him in action in Carlos Saura's *Flamenco* film.

Steve Carr



prizewinner

Matías López Expósito from Barcelona has won the coveted Lampara Minera flamenco singing prize in the 59th International Festival del Cante de las Minas de La Unión.

He also took the group prizes for singing mineras and tientos. The young singer has appeared with El Pele, Pepe Habichuela, Cristina Hoyos and Antonio Canales. He also sings jazz.

El Mati is a name to watch.

flamenco boat



Every May Bank holiday Barraca Flamenca produces flamenco shows in the amphitheatre on Sheldon Square at the Little Venice Festival in London, this year including artists Tony El Despeinado, Anita La Maltesa, and Sam Quay. Actress and personality Maureen Lipman, who has long had an interest in flamenco, was there to see the show.

During the festival, Sam and Barraca Flamenca students decorated Stumpy – “London’s flamenco boat” - for a cavalcade/pageant boat parade on the canal. Stumpy was dressed with flamenco dancers and bunting, and won first prize for best dressed boat 2019.

Photo above Left to right:
Sam Quay, Maureen Lipman, Anita La Maltesa.

paco to oz

Our president, world-famous guitarist and flamenco entrepreneur Paco Peña, not long back from China where he played to full halls, is preparing to travel again – to Australia. But first, a family holiday in Córdoba and on the beach.

He is taking a new show – *Essencias* - to Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and the capital, Canberra, in October. The intention is to

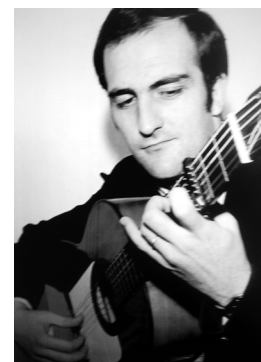
show what beauty there is in the co-operation between the artists, all five of whom will be male.

“We will be focussing on the essence of the different parts, the guitar, the singer and the dancer,” says Paco. The dancer will be our favourite, Angel Muñoz, and the singer, a young man from Córdoba, Rafa de Calli, son of Cordobes singer El Calli.

Sunday, September 8
Lola Rueda and Group
See Listings, page 21

angel online

A guitarist member of the Peña whom we all know as Angel has set up an online desktop catalogue containing videos, biographies, recordings and other flamenco information. Angel Pino Sanchez who has a Bachelor of Applied Science degree, originally set up the catalogue for his own use “however friends kept saying make it public, so I built the website,” he says. He has been working on it for more than five years.



they visited London (Pansequito, El Turroneiro and Antonio Aparecida) usually in private juergas. I recall playing in Manolo’s wine bar as resident guitarist and having the world famous harpist Marisa Robles come regularly to the bar on Saturdays where she would ask for a bottle of red wine and sit at a table and listen to my playing. I even had a visit once by Paco de Lucia.

“My sources were television recordings, YouTube Videos, personal recordings and the biographical data I built up from internet searches and personal conversations.” “During my initial research I came across a fantastic biographical document on the internet from an eastern source which formed the basis of the biographical data I created on the website.”

In later years Angel played mainly for the late Rafael Rodriguez and his brother Modesto Rodriguez.

He was born and grew up in London, both his parents being Spanish refugees from the Spanish Civil War “as were both my godparents - who were well-known flamenco artists and worked in the flamenco establishments of London during the 50’s and 60’s.”

He himself started to play in the 60’s and originally received a few basic lessons from Enrique Bejerano. “Thereafter I taught myself but in those days the only material available was records: videos didn’t exist. I spent a number of years learning to play for dancers and singers, working a lot in a cuadro with Fernando Reyes, Juan Montero, Geraldina, Penny and Juan Ramirez. My main interest was accompanying a singer, which was the driving force of flamenco for me.

“I worked a lot with singers around at that time like Rafael ‘El Coca’ Rodriguez and his brother Modesto and Lionel, Pepete, Rogelio, Antonio Sevilla and so on.

“I played for various singers from Spain when

“I shared a spot at the Chandos* for a couple of years with Mario Basilisco each doing a couple of days a week. Also played in Spain in and around my home town on and off over the years. Those were great days!

“I then spent 10 years working abroad for a well-known IT company during which I studied for the Bachelor of Applied Science degree. Those 10 years were pretty hard for me as I couldn’t engage in my first passion which was flamenco. I was working in a middle eastern country where any form of artistic expression was at best frowned upon and at worst totally prohibited.

“On my return to London everything had changed. The number of flamenco venues had dwindled dramatically. A lot less work was available and a lot of the singers who had come to London during Franco’s era had returned to Spain. I played many times at the London Peña in its early years accompanying Modesto and/or Rafael. I have a multitude of stories of those bygone days which would take a book to retell. I stopped playing semi-professionally in 1999 and thereafter only played in private with friends who had the same “afición” as me.”

Angel Pino

www.flamencobase.com

*The Chandos: a basement bar opposite the All-night Post Office in Trafalgar Square if anyone can remember where that was.

Chandos recollections anyone?

campana



We all love Spain, and most of us can see how the country has changed since the end of the Franco years. But not everywhere! If one knows where to look there will be Spanish families running businesses, or small farms, or growing olives or prickly pears just as their parents/grandparents did. And isn't it up to us when visiting or going on flamenco courses to support them as well as enjoying ourselves and counter the influence of international conglomerates...

Just look around, and see what there is! A case in point is Torremolinos, and in particular what had been a small bar in a not-very-important street. Then Torremolinos got its act together and the street, Calle de la Cruz, became traffic-free, and the bar, La Campana, founded in 1960, was able to expand. But it still has the same oak barrels behind the bar. And it still chalks the bill on the bar top, just as it always did. No computers here! The bar staff runs a finger straight down the list to finish with the total. Sometimes people move along the bar, to greet a friend perhaps. No matter,

the bar knows which tab is which.

Pepe Muriel Gonzalez, who became the owner, has just retired, but his family has now taken over.

Through the efforts of Mayor José Ortiz and the distinguished architect Salvador Moreno Peralta three million Euros is being spent to create a new-look central plaza and boulevard with water features, bronze sculptures, colourful flower beds and shaded areas with seating, and upgrading elsewhere.

One of the most striking elements of the project, which began in January, 2018, is the unique pergola that creates a soft sea wave effect over most of the Plaza Costa del Sol.

The project focuses on the strong link between Torremolinos and water. The project was overseen by architect Peralta and involves the transformation of more than 10,000 square metres, creating a Mediterranean pavement café society scene and an urban space for cultural activities, which, according to the mayor, will become "a space of coexistence".

counter point

However, as the mayor explained, the transformation is not complete as there is "still very much work to do". This includes the long hoped-for renovation of the iconic Barrabino mansion in Plaza Costa del Sol, which will become a cultural, artistic and exhibition centre. The house will gain prominence as the central focus of the square and the grounds are to be opened to allow easy access to the Plaza Picasso, and Plaza de Independencia, home of the town's new gourmet market.

The market, which is due to open in the summer, will promote the Sabor a Malaga brand and will offer fresh fruit, vegetables and products from in the Malaga province.

However, the renovations have not been limited to the Plaza Costa del Sol, because the well-trodden steps that lead from Calle San Miguel to Bajondillo beach have been reformed and laid with ornate mosaic-style tiles, while plans to renovate the town's symbolic Pimentel watch tower have recently been approved.

This is the biggest change Torremolinos has seen since the 1960s and it is part of an overall



project to improve the town's ailing image.

Frank Sinatra, Bridget Bardot, Orson Wells and a host of their contemporaries enjoyed the fashionable scene that existed in Torremolinos

during the 1950s and '60s. The town enjoyed continued success as a leading resort during the '70s and '80s, but over the last 20 years, Torremolinos has lived on the reputation of its glorious past. The bars and entertainment venues closed down one by one due to a disastrous decline in visiting tourists, even the high street shops and fast food outlets began to disappear, and the centre of the town took on the appearance of a derelict shantytown.

Torremolinos was a pioneer in the tourism industry of the Costa del Sol and the mayor is hoping his town's new image will make it the most contemporary destination in Andalucía.

Torremolinos ended 2018 with

more than five million overnight stays, its best figures for a decade. The town also achieved the first blue flag and the Q of quality for its beaches.

Vera King and Tony Bryant



pergola at the Plaza Costa del Sol.

tradition and innovation

Amir El Saffar Ensemble *Luminiscencia*

London premiere 6th July 2019

Voice - Gema Caballero • Dance - Vanesa Aibar • Percussion - Pablo Martin Jones
Electronics - Lorenzo Bianchi Hoesch • Trumpet - Santur • Voice, composition -
Amir El Saffar • Violin, Viola, Iraqi Fiddle - Dena ElSaffar.
Presented in association with The Shubbak Festival.

...

David Carmona *Un Sueño de Locura* • Friday July 12

Guitar - David Carmona • Voice - Carmen Molina
Percussion - Miguel 'El Cheyenne'

...

Kiki Morente Albayzin • July 12

Voice - Kiki Morente • Guitar - David Carmona • Percussion - Pedro Popo Gabarre
Dance - Irene Rueda.

The rescheduling of the annual Sadler's Wells flamenco festival caused more than a little feather ruffling among London aficionados. Many of us had become accustomed to the ritual of shaking off the dark days of January with a visit to Sadler's Wells to catch up on some of flamenco's finest, check out new acts and flamenco trends and of course catch up with old friends along the way.

Assumptions challenged, perspectives altered, time changes everything. Eyeing a copy of the festival programme earlier, I had lighted upon an image of an Arabic trumpeter and immediately envisioned a trumpeter attached to the usual *cuadro*... instead, once the show began I was immediately drawn into a sound world looking back to the Arabic and Moorish influences so crucial to the origins, as well as forward to the continual fascinating evolution of flamenco.

The journey began with a Spanish trumpet fanfare that evoked wide open spaces,

dramatic landscapes, an invitation. All those exotic and romantic tropes that got me hooked on flamenco in the first place. From the outset Emir ElSaffra stamps his authority

on the performance, purveying a clear vision and the promise of an engaging and original performance to come. There is no guitarist - that's refreshing (and brave) in Flamenco.

The lineup involved most of the usual elements, but the guitar as atmospheric creator was replaced by voice, trumpet, santur, violin, viola and Iraqi fiddle (a rebab-like instrument) and also by electronic sound effects man Lorenzo Bianchi Hoesch, like a movie sound maker but live and very much part of the performance.

The sense of theatre, of being transported, was heightened by interesting and novel ways of processing the sounds of dancer Vanessa Aibar's footwork, in a very "concrete" way. The walking, the slow, agonising scrape of shoe on floor, amplified effects highlighting the contemporary angularity of Aibar's style. Her power and precision throughout showed us she is highly accomplished in more traditional expressions of flamenco as well.

Malagueña/ Verdiales offered great scope to explore cross-mediterranean references. The opening of the piece juxtaposed *makam* - (arabic song forms) **continued 9 >>**

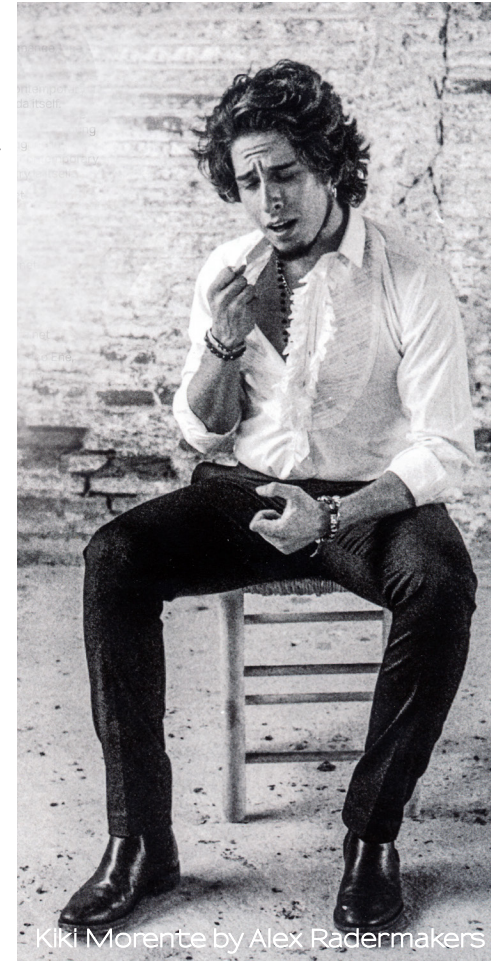
at the lilian baylis

page 8 continued >>

and flamenco *temples* (opening vocalisations). The *caña* served as another ideal vehicle for an opening duel between the melismatic declamations of flamenco singer and trumpeter; other numbers featured bowed string instruments and the highly evocative dulcimer-like santur.

At some stage during the performance I looked over at the percussionist and swore it was U.S. flamenco guitarist David Serva, a long-time resident of Madrid who has played for Manuel Agujetas and Blanca del Rey among many others. I soon realised it was actually his son Pablo, whom I recalled as a wee slip of a lad from when I resided in Madrid in the 80's, now a flamenco percussionist of many years' professional standing.

There followed a nice interpretation of *debla/ siguiriya*, impossible not to recall at this point Miles Davis's *Sketches of Spain*. The intensity was enhanced by more use of electronic effects, the digital musician getting involved here in a dance-like way as he swept along over his control bars and waved a stylus to shape sound waves. The audience was swept into a climactic vision of primeval chaos, culminating in an



KIKI Morente by Alex Radermakers

insane solo from Pablo, on the verge of doing a Keith Moon and trashing his kit. He dropped his sticks and kept going, and I feared he would slice his hand on the cymbal.

The *bata de cola*, an iconic instrument of the flamenco aesthetic, announced *guajira*. Further from the arabic influences of the Phrygian mode, it was interesting to see the approach taken this major key style. It was the use of instrumentation here that stood out, the familiar hook of the *guajira* played on the santur, and doubled *pizzicato* on the viola. This gave the piece a baroque feel. It would have been nice to have heard some more development of the basic *guajira* melody but overall an original

and well-executed interpretation of this popular *ida y vuelta* palo.

Tientos-Tangos, intensely gypsy in feel with its opening chorus in *Calo* and a wonderful groove in the tangos made for a final feel-good number to end an absorbing and successful exploration of new ways of fusing flamenco with other musical traditions and simultaneously looking at both its origins and its future. It straddled the divide between live music and theatre in the wonderfully intimate surroundings of the Lilian Baylis studio theatre. **continued 10 >>**

lilian baylis

9 continued >>

A week later I returned to the Baylis for a

double bill - David Carmona's *Suenos* and later, Kiki Morente's show *Albayzin*. Carmona, from Granada's Fernandez de Illora family, came straight in with a solo guitar recital, refreshing in these days of quintets, boxes and basses. His playing was immediately referential to the modern masters, Paco de Lucia, Tomatito, Riqueni, and D.Carmona's own teacher, Manolo Sanlucar. His employment of signature gestures and bravura embellishments, clear and bold crescendos, from pianissimos, made possible by today's use of amplification, to explosive *remates*, made use of the full dynamic range of the instrument. Carmona's vision is clear and explicit - to create a distinct school of modern flamenco guitar. A teacher at the Cordoba Conservatory, he spoke at some length to the audience outlining his approach and aims. For example, introducing a *bulerias* in the mixyoldian mode. (Something I saw done very effectively more than 20 years ago by our own Francisco Antonio, another creative player influenced by Sanlucar).

Carmona's solea was similar in feel to the opening tarantas, in that it kept returning to certain gestures and inflections; like many creative players and other artists, he seems to have his own "*idee fix*" which forms the basis of an individual style. I would place Carmona's *idee fix* as located somewhere very close to Paco de Lucia's *Zyryab* album, in particular the solea *Tio Sabas* and the fandango *Almonte*.

Kiki Morente's show began with an opening surprise, as Kiki strides onto the stage with an electro-acoustic steel string guitar strapped around his neck. A statement of identity perhaps, to open an eclectic set. Manzanita style *naynos* and ketamaesque chords frame

the intro then he sings an arrangement of Lorca's *El llanto de la guitarra*. Echoes of his father's warm vocal tones resound. He is joined by the dancer and percussionists for some contemporary input in the form of beat boxing and body percussion, morphing into some wonderful palmas, beautiful *sordas* and touches of an aire that make me feel as if I was on a street corner in Granada. The show is infused with a great sense of the actual flamenco Kiki has grown up enjoying with his friends, facilitating a charming and genuine authenticity so often missing in flamenco theatre performances.

Kiki's show was a like a mini festival; he left the stage to his fellow performers for much of the time; an extensive percussion solo, a dance number by "guest artists" from Carmona's earlier show and another chance to see David Carmona perform his intriguing solo *Rincon de la Solea, solea por buleria/cana* was a good opportunity to see Carmona in an accompanying role, which he delivered with great aplomb, treating us to a mixture of traditional and modern falsetas.

The taranta began with Morente reprising some letras made popular by his father: the same gentle whispering quality, the charismatic delivery of an engaging storyteller. Carmona's accompaniment was supportive and there was a sense of genuine feeling between the artists. The tarantos was danced with grace and power by Irene Rueda, in a performance evocative of the best tablao flamenco of Granada.

As I emerged onto Rosebery Avenue, artists and concertgoers from the show in Sadler's Wells were mingling happily in the balmy summer evening air, and the Sadler's Flamenco festival seemed alive and well.

Tony Tonks (aka El Despeinao)

like no other



Israel Galván · photo. Matthias Leitzke

La Fiesta, presented by Israel Galván at Sadler's Wells (April 27/28) was truly a performance Like No Other. For one thing it began with an empty stage on to which slowly ambled an elderly couple. Who sat there, waiting, as did we, the audience, sitting there waiting...Others slowly ambled onstage, waiting...

All were waiting for the fiesta to start! On came a creature clad in skin-clinging bandages, humping a lithe body along the floor like a giant snake. Surely that was not the great Israel Galván, not a sparkle, not a gold thread nor piece of brocade, not a boot, in sight. It was indeed the great dancer himself as later performance revealed.

Gradually more characters joined the elderly couple - the man turned out to be a singer (El Niño de Elche), and the woman (Uchi, from Triana), whom no-one would describe as "slim" or "tall", turned out to be a real goer when it came to alegrías.

I heard it on the grapevine that some people walked out on this show. If so, their mistake. "Modern stuff" does not appeal to me, but the "high" engendered by this one lasted several days. It was a puzzle until one settled in and realised where it was going. And as there would be several different items being enacted onstage at the same time that required total concentration. And of course the performance

of Israel himself. There was a fashion - some of us remember it well - for seated zapateado. Israel went one better. Lying on his back leaving only the back of his heels free to drum out the rhythm on the floor.

Writing in the programme he says *La Fiesta* carries the memory of the tourist tablaos where his parents used to dance, polka dot skirts, combs and lacquered buns. Also reflecting the spontaneous movement of village flamenco traditions: facetious, bawdy, untamed.

In those days when fin de fiesta came he would be called onstage. "I was four years old at most." For his parents they were presenting the image of a family. For Israel he was getting more money than anyone "...people were throwing banknotes at me".

This party looks improvised, but only because it's been written carefully in advance, "with the precise goal of being forgotten and lived anew, every night, for the first time," he says. And never a foot wrong. It was, as fiesta should be, fun all through. And Yes, it was a bit bawdy.

Cast: who all took several differing roles: Israel Galván, Jesús Aguilera, Eloísa Cantón, Emilio Caracafé, Ramón Martínez, Ninó de Elche, Alejandro Rojas-Marcos, Alia Sellami, Uchi.

Vera King

sara baras



photo: Carole Edrich

A bit more than 20 years ago a young dancer was being talked about in Madrid. Opinion was that she wouldn't be able to cut it on the world stage. The much-missed Flamenco International magazine published in London at that time and which wrote about her, did not agree. Nor did Sadler's Wells, which even though she was virtually unknown here, booked her. And carried on booking her.

She topped the bill again at this year's festival, her twentieth anniversary. Sombras (Shadows) ran for six nights, the only other show running for more than one being the popular annual gala night.

After an introduction with a corps de ballet – four men and two women, suited and looking as alike as peas in a pod – Sara Baras stepped out with the number with which she is now associated: farruca. Not since Carmen Amaya has a woman

dancer gone out in male attire to such acclaim, though in the intervening years flamenco has made such advances in speed and innovation that there now would be no comparison.

Over the course of her career "Farruca has been both a springboard to her most celebrated successes and a shadow dancing at her dazzlingly percussive heels," says the programme.

The evening gave us a wide choice of the flamenco canon, most of it danced by superstar Sara, up-to-the-minute yet including braceos from the past. She was also responsible for the creation, direction and choreography.

Admiration too for everyone in the company, dancers, musicians, and the expert lighting effects which added to the duende.

Vera King

miguel poveda



photos Maxi del Campo

This was a show to surpass all expectations! With his "come alive on stage" persona, Miguel Poveda shone, illuminating his audience, whose response mirrored the energy and joy exuding from the stage.

I had been told that he was good; I was not prepared for just how good! To be billed as one of the best flamenco singers in the world is recommendation enough but it is his performance live which undeniably raises him to a higher level. His natural ease on stage, the mutual affection between singer and guitarist, the interaction with palmas, dance, percussion and voice, allowed for that spontaneity which is totally unrehearsable and is the true essence of flamenco.

This, of course, in no way underestimates the power of the most important element of the show, the voice! While retaining all the rhythm and strength of traditional flamenco, Poveda realises, in his high range, a light perfection reminiscent of Valderrama. This was most notable in his rendition of guajira. For me, however, the "shiver up the spine" moment came when all the musicians became one in an early Latino petenera, something I had never heard before. With effortless simplicity, two voices

gelled in harmony to create a moment of pure magic. It was followed by a flamenco petenera, a gem which, when superstition prevails, is far too often avoided.

It was a truly inspirational evening. I know for a fact that Poveda's guitarist, Jesus Guerrero, has inspired at least one flamenco guitarist in the audience. I'm sure the two male dancers have had a quite similar effect on other spectators. It was certainly a privilege not only to be there but to understand everything that Miguel Poveda said to his audience. Some of his great charm sadly must have been lost on non-Spanish speakers. Talking with great humour, he stressed the importance of improvisation and the respect he had for those musicians beside him on stage. He certainly did not allow his lack of English to inhibit him. With typical "Españolidad" and just a few stock phrases in English, he still managed to delight his audience and a great time was had by all, Señor Poveda included!

The one surprise for me, after decades of coinciding with flamenco, was that, in this show, beards seemed to be obligatory! That probably explains why it was an all male cast!

Jill Reyes

rocio molina

The person best able to report on the performance of Rocio Molina and Company in *Fallen from Heaven* is probably not me. Despite decades of association with flamenco and a more than adequate understanding of the Spanish language, I find myself poorly equipped to comment on this interpretation of the traditional art form.

There is no doubt that the performance at the Sadler's Wells annual festival had all the elements requisite for a first-rate flamenco show, an accomplished dancer, a faultless guitarist and an authentic cantaor. Traditionalists may consider the performance veered too far from established flamenco but, not being personally steeped in dance, I viewed the show more as a piece of theatre.

An opening atonal fanfare gave way to silence and a motionless dancer, dramatically poised in white bata de cola. There she remained, without music, without movement. The dress remained magnificent. Someone in the audience coughed. Time continued, motionlessly.

In the prolonged stillness, Conceptual Art was what came to mind. I lived through the rise of Conceptual Art in my long and hazy art school days, now far in the past and a long way from modernity! The art I favour never was Conceptual. The best painter of the last half-century is still working in egg tempera in an Italian village, painting scenes of stillness, silence and space. Should I not, then, have appreciated these same qualities when I witnessed them transferred to the dimensions of the stage?

Time elapsed. Slight, almost undetectable movements began and continued, gradually and slowly increasing. It would have been a photographer's monochromatic dream! I visualised Ms Molina surrounded from every

angle by suited men with cameras, capturing every gesture, every frame. A hall lined with such black and white masterpieces would, indeed, have been worthy of acclaim!

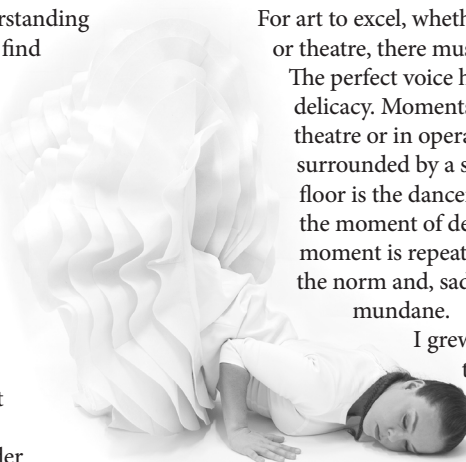
For art to excel, whether in painting or music or theatre, there must be light and shade.

The perfect voice has both strength and delicacy. Moments of intense drama, in theatre or in opera, are only effective when surrounded by a sea of calm. Falling to the floor is the dancer's dramatic moment, the moment of death or despair. If that moment is repeated, the drama becomes the norm and, sadly, the norm becomes the mundane.

I grew up with theatre. From that moment, as a child, watching *Blitz* on the West End stage, I was hooked. In spite of my age, I am not

looking for an easy ride! The often bemoaned *Happy Days* needed no explanation; Juliet Stephenson's performance remains with me still. Neither am I fazed by nudity. Years of life-drawing normalised the human body in all its naked beauty! I have for many years appreciated on-stage nudity as a natural part of performance. I am a naturalist at heart. However, the approach, like flamenco itself, must be bold! Surely, if a performer is beyond puberty, coyness is unnecessary. The hands of a naked dancer do not need to cover her modesty. Avant-garde must keep abreast of the staid world of Art Institutions, which discarded fig leaves long ago. It was not until the very last number that the show really came alive. Suddenly, the instruments and voices gelled, the dance followed the rhythms of the music and, as if constraints had at last been lifted, the performers were finally allowed to enjoy that natural interaction that is the very essence of flamenco. For the audience, it became instantly so much more accessible. Electric guitar, drums, cante and dance all came together as the stage erupted into a joyous and vibrant finale.

Jill Reyes. photo Terry Clear.



gala

The Gala Flamenca show at Sadler's Wells this year showcased three dancers carefully choreographed by Manuel Liñan.

Eduardo Guerrero, is a strutting and stamping kind of dancer, in the tradition of Joaquín Cortés. Like Cortés, he is rather keen on revealing his bare chest. 'Look at me' he gestured, frequently. The audience obliged but unfortunately they also giggled where

they were clearly meant to be gasping in awe at his leather-clad manliness. Guerrero's fierce footwork sessions in the central caña number were punctuated with many show-stopping desplantes, llamadas and remates, although they did tend to interrupt the flow and shape of his performance.

María Moreno uses more upper body than zapateado and was competent with her long bata de cola in the alegrías, also showing skill in the vigorous twirling of her mantón (the shawl being Liñan's own favourite accessory). A veteran of Eva Yerbabuena's dance group, Moreno displayed wonderful technique but seemed uncomfortable with Liñan's jerky choreography.

Mercedes Ruiz is more old-school but under



Mercedes Ruiz. photo: Juan Conca

Liñan she was there to challenge not conform. At one point she donned a black "Rocio" high-waisted trouser outfit for a macho display of machine-gun zapateado, impressively moonwalking on her heels across the stage at one point. She was also superb with the castanets.

Santiago Lara and Javier Ibáñez on guitars, had a few fancy falsettas but were mostly heavy on the compás, drowned out in places by Paco Vega

on percussion with his rock band drum kit.

The true flamenco grit was delivered by the singer María Terremoto, daughter of the late Fernando Fernández Pantoja and granddaughter of the legendary Terremoto de Jerez. Still a teenager, María is the real deal with her authentic 'metal' voice. Ismael 'El Bola', a younger member of the Fernández flamenco family of Seville, also sang well.

There was an admirable bravado and much pizzazz in this gala which everyone loved. But the musical character of the various flamenco palos and interplay between the artists were all sacrificed under Liñan's overly tight theatrical direction.

Steve Carr

sharing

A common step in the creative process for many dance forms, dance Sharings are normally quiet events to which a few trusted creatives and key funders are invited. The result of an intense period of choreographic and company development, they will sometimes show the entirety of what has been developed, and sometimes an extract or aspects of a planned performance, depending on the choreographer's needs. Jesus Carmona – and one can assume Miguel Marin who, as Flamenco Festival Director at Sadler's Wells must have initiated each of this year's Carmona Sharings – does it differently.



photo: Carole Edrich

At RichMix in London "Be Bold, Be Heard" during the Sadler's Wells flamenco gala brought together Carmona, painter Andres Merida (look up his works, there's one of Sara Baras which is particularly interesting), multi-instrumentalist Sabio Janiak (Richard Alston, Hofesh Shechter, The Place, loads more) and the YoniVerse Poetry Collective to produce a series of pieces, each to a word or tonal poem. Merida speaks

no English and the three Asian poets speak no Spanish. Despite this, it's quite amazing how, in a residency of three short days, people can produce something that looks like a coherent set of word and tonal poems, although I suspect that the coherence was more to do with Janiak's musical expertise than a process of collaborative investigation.

carmona

Responding to both rhythm and intent, much of Carmona's work was often more danza contemporanea than the passionately precise, awesomely expressive flamenco which I've seen him perform before. The notable exception, and my favourite part of the work, was when he took his shoes off, sat on the ground and used his shoes as percussion instruments, creating rhythms of palos that I could understand. A normal sharing would be followed by a set of questions from the artist to the audience, as the sharing would have been conceived to get feedback from which the work would be further developed. At RichMix this was turned on its head and became a regular Q&A session from the audience which I thought was a bit of a shame.

At one level it's easy to see why a Sharing is needed. If a venue with a mission to share new dance with its audiences hosts a residency at all, they need to show the outcome of that work. It's why RichMix Manager Margot Przymierska pushed so hard at the tech and dress rehearsal. At another level it might be considered misleading. I'm not sure it matters, but experience tells that, if this work is taken further, the final performance may be nothing like what we saw on that day.

Carmona went from RichMix to a performance in Paris and returned for a slightly more leisurely five-day residency at Sadler's Wells Lilian Baylis Theatre. In this he collaborated with Gaga dancers (slow fluid movements predicated on a deep listening of the body) and Janiak again. The Sharing for this one felt more organic, and given the improvisational nature of jazz, gaga and flamenco it probably felt that way as they worked together as well. I was given the impression that the artists had evolved what they wanted to present rather than had it pragmatically imposed.

We were told very clearly that this is a Sharing, and the seeds of a work rather than the forest. Bravely, some of Carmona's movement phrases were indisputably Gaga, however most was recognisable as flamenco although he worked within the form, exploring the edges and investigating what might be done. Use of sound, text and his movement made the work feel contemporary, and the half hour

of work they produced was high quality and an amazing result of such a short time.

Carmona danced both male and female energies clearly, and while the women dancing gaga felt overpowering at times, this might have been deliberate, the gaga dancers' slow, deliberate movements a great counter to Carmona's precise, well-timed intensity. Macho shapes (such as the bodybuilder's front biceps move) repeated within movement forms, which I felt were quite clichéd, but which may well change if this work is taken further. After the performance Carmona asked some great questions of the audience. Any creative in this position knows it's great to get honest feedback and will help to take the evening and the performance to a new level. In all, this was a great evening, worthy – even at this early stage – of being on the main stage, and what they achieved without lighting was fantastic.

He hasn't just participated in Sharings and the residencies that produce them here, either. In fact, it seems he's on a campaign, as a cursory search of the internet show that Carmona isn't just doing rapid-fire development Sharings here in London. Carmona was "exploring stillness" in a residency at the NY City Center and at the Arsht where he was working with Latin grooves.

Whether investigating qualities of masculinity and femininity, mixing flamenco with the spoken word and Sabio's music, energetically with a specialist in that, working with Latin rhythms and grooves or just investigating new creative relationships, Carmona appears to be on a mission.

That this process has been adopted at all by such an extraordinarily well-known emerging flamenco star says as much about how the improvisational form of flamenco is developing as it does of his personal creative journey. Only time will tell how this affects the creative space of the dance as a whole, and I'll keep pushing the Powers That Be for an interview and hopefully will be able to share Carmona's perspective on why he has taken this particular route of creative development, in a future issue of *Flamenco News*.

Carole Edrich

new view



photo Benjamin Sommare

It's one thing to believe, as a flamenco enthusiast, that the music and dance is its own language and that it speaks to everyone irrespective of their background. Quite another to see it happen.

These two artists, who freely admit that their background is not flamenco, have come up with an improvisational situational dance that demonstrates the truth of an idealised flamenco beautifully. When dancing to *Alegrias*, they are happy, their silences – whether without music, to traditional *silencios* or even to what might be the arrhythmic sound of scratches from an LP) are exactly that. Deep, meaningful moments are performed to *cante jondo* and whirligig moments could as easily be *Sevillanas* enthusiasts improvising as it could be contemporary dancers performing improvisationally to a pre-defined structure.

It's not deconstruction, at least not in that frenetic incredibly articulate detailed

deconstruction we get from *Israel Galván*. It's not supposed to be. Rather, it is the interpretation of flamenco by dancers who practice a parallel art. That **Albert Quesada & Zoltán Vakulya** dance to the overall musical feel rather than the underlying rhythms of each *palos* is natural. They're interpreting their feel of flamenco, not performing it. It doesn't matter – they are engaging, energetic, introspective and intense. In a whirl of performance, the contrasts between frenetic travelling, gentle constraint and deadpan humour were wonderful, but the sudden and personal intensity of the outward turning of their inward gaze crowned my day. It wasn't just me as I checked with others. In this in-the-round performance they pulled us into a dizzyingly electric personal moment, eye-to-eye in a dizzying duende that I will not forget.

at Lilian Baylis Studio
www.sadlerswells.com/whats-on/2019/

family affair

Dynasties are the lifeblood of flamenco. The best of the art is learned at home among kith and kin. Alonso Núñez Fernández, "Rancapino Chico", was born into one of the great flamenco families, the son of the cantaor Alonso Núñez Núñez "Rancapino" and the grandson of the legendary Orillo del Puerto.

It is said that young Rancapino Chico could hum flamenco long before he could talk. No wonder, with family and friends such as Chano Lobato, Juan

Villar, Aurora Vargas and Fosforito paying regular visits to his home in Chiclana near Cádiz. Barely into his seventh year he appeared on stage with none other than Juanito Valderrama. His big breakthrough came when, aged only ten, he sang on the tribute album to the great guitarist Juan Habichuela.

After an early career dabbling with flamenco rock and fusion, Rancapino Chico now focusses on singing the purest of pure flamenco, a superb interpreter of the work of greats of yesteryear, La Perla de Cádiz, Paco Toronjo, Manolo Caracol and Enrique de Mellizo. This is a voice harking back to the glory days before Camarón de la Isla, which is somewhat ironic given his father's life-long friendship with the flamenco pop icon.

The Rancapino family nickname - burnt pine - refers to the family's dark looks. Rancapino



Chico's voice is capable of both darkness and light; it is a voice of many colours and hues. He makes use of delicate flamenco melismas to create a gently shaded impression.

He is especially effective with the fine grain of the *fandangos*, *cantiñas* and *malagueñas*, especially when singing interpretations by long-gone fellow *gaditanos* such as Aurelio Sellés.

Having recently won numerous awards, including the Cruzcampo New

Compás prize, he is now the

most popular singer on the flamenco *peña* and festival circuit. Jerez guitarist Antonio Higuero is his favoured accompanist, with whom he appears on his first album, *Por Mi Amor Al Arte* out earlier this year. The recording is both a homage to his father and to the rich flamenco legacy of Cádiz province. It is recorded on location; sounds of motorbikes, chattering and clinking bar glasses in the background giving it the raw edge of a live performance.

Rancapino Chico continues a long family tradition; a voice and a name which is set to last. On stage in Seville a few weeks ago, he introduced the world to the incredible voice of Esmerelda Rancapino, his up-and-coming 12-year-old niece, the next generation in this great flamenco dynasty.

Steve Carr

annual general meeting of members

Holy Apostles Church Hall, Cumberland Street, SW1V 4LY

Sunday, September 8, 6.15pm

- Reports of chair, treasurer and membership secretary will be available at the meeting.
- Any resolution from members must be proposed, seconded and submitted in writing to chair Clive Crawford, 13 Bronnley Court, 283/303 Uxbridge Road, Acton, London W3 9BE or email to info@flamenco-london.org.uk, before the day of the meeting.
- **Elections:** those seeking re-election are Clive Crawford, Vera King and Yumi Whyte.
Caroline Wolff, Steve Carr, David MacMurray and Magdalena Kurantowicz, having been elected last year for a two-year term, do not need re-election this year.
- Any other nominations, both candidate and proposer to be fully paid-up members, should be sent to Clive Crawford at his home address before the date of the meeting.
- All paid-up members are welcome to attend.

alvaro at the peña

We go into our new peña year with much excitement. First, and perhaps most important, our AGM, the event that marks us out as a voluntary organisation with the one aim, good flamenco at a reasonable price. The summons is set out here.

The hot news is that **Flamenco:Flamenco**, the group from Granada led by dancer Alvaro Guarnido that was given such a reception back in May, has been re-booked and will be back on **October 13**. That's Alvaro, singer Gema



Congratulations to **Álvaro Guarnido** for making it to the shortlist for the prestigious dance prize in Las Minas (Cartagena). He is pleased to have made it through to the semi-finals.

Contreras, and guitarist Manuel Carvajal.
November 10 – as well as being **Juerga** – brings the biennial bursary dance competition founded in the name of life member Ron Hitchins. There's a prize of £300. Details are on the Peña website: www.flamenco-london.org.uk

This brings us up to Christmas, when **Flamenco Express** will be bringing Titi Flores and El Pola from Spain. More news next time.

national listings performances

FLAMENCO EXPRESS

September with El Pola and Victor Fernández

- **26 Landor Space** • 70 Landor Road. SW9 9PH • box: 0207 732 8493
www.landorspace.com
- **27 Quarterhouse** • 49 Tontine Street. Folkestone. CT20 1JT • box: 01303 760750 • www.creativefolkestone.org.uk
- **28 Pasha's Restaurant** • 58 Camberwell Rd. London SE5 0EE
box: 0207 732 8493 • www.flamencoexpress.co.uk
- **29 The Brunswick** • 1 Holland Road. Hove BN3 1JF • box: 0127 373 3984
www.brunswick.net

December with El Titi Flores and Antonio El Pola

- **7 Pasha's Restaurant** • 58 Camberwell Rd. SE5 0EE box: 0207 732 8493
www.flamencoexpress.co.uk
- **8 Peña Flamenca de Londres** • Holy Apostles Church Hall • Cumberland Street • SW1V 4LY • www.flamenco-london.org.uk

February 2020 (Guests TBA)

- **29 Chapel Arts Centre** • St James Memorial Hall Avon • Lower Borough Walls • Bath BA1 1QR • www.chapelarts.org/events

March

- **1 The Brunswick** • 1 Holland Road. Hove BN3 1JF • box: 0127 373 3984
www.brunswick.net
- **11 Upstairs at The Ritzy** • Brixton Oval, Coldharbour Ln, SW2 1JG.
Phone: 0871 902 5747 • www.picturehouses.com
- **14 Stables Theatre** • The Bourne, Hastings TN34 3BD • Box: 01424 423221
www.stablestheatre.co.uk

April

- **25 The Roses Theatre** • Sun Street, Tewkesbury, GL20 5NX • box: 01684 295074 • www.rosestheatre.org
- **26 Devonshire Park Theatre** • 8-10 Compton St, Eastbourne BN21 4BW
Box: 01323 412000 • www.eastbournetheatres.co.uk

JUAN MARTIN

- **October 24** • Hellens Manor. Ledbury.
- **February 7, 2020** • New Brighton Floral Pavilion and Blue Lounge



PEÑA FLAMENCA DE LONDRES

- **September 8** • Lola Rueda y Compania
- **October 13** • Alvaro Guarnido and company from Granada
- **November 10** • Juerga plus Ron Hitchins Bursary Presentation.
- **December 8** • Flamenco Express with El Titi Flores and El Pola.
Plus presentation of Ron Hitchins Bursary Award.

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CARLOS OTERO • Wednesdays City Academy, Lupus Street, Pimlico, SW1 4LY. City-academy.com or 0207 042 8833.

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