

What the Critics have to say...

“Enrique was all smooth edges and poise, giving the audience glimpses of her power in intense bursts of footwork and serpentine pirouettes, before deftly tightening the reins.”

Bridget Cauthry, *the dance current*

“...she luxuriates in the soft and hard dancing styles of flamenco. With her undulating rhythms and her skilful articulation of percussive footwork, Enrique invigorates the serpentine line of beauty that highlights this ancient dance style.”

Deirdre Kelly,
The Globe and Mail

About Esmeralda Enrique...

“...there is still an unmistakable collective gasp from the audience as Esmeralda herself makes her entrance.”

Lise Watson. *TWAS*

“Imagine being lyrical and graceful, she doesn’t seem to have any bones in her body...a beautiful kind of swirling cloud of movement which is why it is always so lovely to watch her.”

Paula Citron, *Classical 96FM*



About the Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Company...

"But if music and dance achieved an ideal balance it was in *Voz de Mujer*...the eight dancers moved with almost military precision...it was the most polished dancing of the entire festival, inciting most members of the audience to leap to their feet."

William Littler,
Toronto Star

"incredible and infectious...left the audience buzzing"

Bridget Cauthry *The dance current*

"...the combination of the music and the dance made this an unforgettable evening for everyone."

Daniel Bernal *torontohispano.com*

"I love it when a show exceeds my expectations and this just absolutely caught fire by the end..."

Paula Citron, *Classical 96FM*

"Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Company is vintage Grande Cru... *Poeta* is poetry in motion."

Susan Walker, *Toronto Star*

The audience is guaranteed wall-to-wall dancing

Habourfront Centre – NextSteps

"The virtuostic display is wild and dizzying...like a spontaneous show of unbridled energy in the back rooms of a late night café."

Deirdre Kelly, *The Globe and Mail*

"...Enrique's company of fierce, perfect dancers...as usual brought the capacity audience to their feet"

Rebecca Todd, *Eye Magazine*

"Poetry in motion...the marvel is that Enrique was able to isolate the complicated and dense rhythms of the progressive jazz pieces and layer her own series of fascinating counterpoint and accents. The dancing was an exciting swirl of movement, but more to the point, a rhythmic triumph."

Paula Citron, *The Globe and Mail*



REVIEWS & RESPONSES

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Peterborough Examiner - Saturday, February 5, 2011

DANCE: Flamenco From the Heart presented at Showplace Peterborough

Flamenco warmed chilly Peterborough night

Peterborough's frigid atmosphere suddenly melted Friday night at Showplace as Esmeralda Enrique's Spanish Dance Company took the stage by storm with fiery, passionate flamenco.

This tiny company of five female dancers was accompanied by live music from two guitarists and two singers.

Working on solos, duets, to full quintets, Enrique sometimes led, sometimes followed her companions in the often-improvisational movement that has evolved into what is seen as the national dance of Spain.



Bea Quarrie
REVIEW

The history of flamenco is traced to a period of time known as the Reconquest in the region known as Andalusia.

Oppressed people the world over have found artistic expression through theatre, dance and music.

Native Andalusians are no exception, and their combination of music and dance that is now known as flamenco comes out of the interplay between Islamic, Sephardic, Gypsy and Andalusian cultures.

Singers Shirley Pincay and Gina Tantaló, once they had warmed up their voices, captured the strong flavour of the essentially highly unpolished, raw street singers from that region.



Clapping, offering vocal admonishment or encouragement to the dancers, these singers were as involved in the unfolding of each number in an improvisational manner much the way jazz musicians riff on a piece.

Their powerful rendition of *Convergence* and *The Guitar* in Act Two of Friday night's show had the audience mesmerized. Enrique is well matched in her younger counterparts — they carry their bodies with such grace and explode into volatile movement, tapping such eloquent staccato rhythm, searing their image into the heart.

Paloma Cortes, Angela Del Sol, Ilse Gudino, Noelia La Morocha glide effortlessly in vivid costumes to such numbers as *Malaguena - To Forget You* - exploring the futility of erasing the memory of a bittersweet love.

The passionate embrace of universal topics of love, loss, identity, jubilation was given their turn as each dancer took center stage.

In a number called *Solea*, Enrique suddenly emerges from the darkness in a breathtakingly brilliant blood red dress and shawl, sheds flowers from her hair, drops the fringed shawl and blazes a trail of sharply drawn movements, crisply executed turns, mesmerizing footwork and fluttering hands as if defying the very air around her.

Enrique was responsible for most of the choreography, with some of the company members sharing in that role for individual numbers.

In their final number, the ensemble displayed their most theatrical piece with precision and delightful playfulness.

At times challenging to outdo each other, their sensual movements, spasmodic and flippant unpredictable stops, tangos and Tarantos delighted the almost full house at Showplace.

Bea Quarrie is an actor, teacher, artist, producer and freelance reviewer for *The Examiner*.

CLIFFORD SKARSTEDT
Examiner

Dancers perform during the Flamenco From the Heart presented by The Spanish Dance Company and artistic director Esmeralda Enrique on Friday, at the Showplace Performance Centre.

Arts Maven - Saturday, November 27, 2010

Review - Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Co in Espejo de Oro

ESMERALDA ENRIQUE SPANISH DANCE COMPANY

presents the world premiere of **Espejo de Oro / Mirror of Gold** featuring the company with special guest artists from Spain continues to Sunday, November 28 at Fleck Dance Theatre, Toronto

The essence of Flamenco is passion restrained by elegance, the stylized movements adding grace to its expression just as the rhythm adds definition to the music. That's just what the **Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Company** delivers in Espejo de Oro in a performance that goes well beyond the traditional and folkloric.



That goes well beyond the traditional and folkloric.

The solid basis for the show begins with live music. The piece itself begins with a trumpet player who walks on stage, soon joined by two guitarists and two singers, and then the dancers who enter and leave in their turn. The set is dramatic, splashed with blue and red lights and projections at the back that glowed like stained glass or spun like a kaleidoscope (among other effects). The piece uses elements like the titular mirror, large and paned like a French door, where dancer/choreographer **Juan Ogalla** poses, almost challenging his own reflection.

Photos by John Lauener

• L-R - Niño de Elche, Esmeralda Enrique, Manuel Soto; Guitarists in back ground. José Valle "Chuscales", Nicolás Hernández

The choreographic vocabulary goes beyond its origins in **Andalusian folklore** towards interpretive and expressive contemporary dance, with the piece unfolding in a series of segments. The musicians play on stage, sometimes only voice (or two voices,) and sometimes the singers interact directly with the dancers. I don't speak Spanish (more's the pity) but it sounded like a riveting story.

Juan's performance is taut and powerful, and the several ladies were graceful, sexy and proud in solo, duo and ensemble pieces. The costumes were gorgeous - I want one! The dance passes by on the stage a swirl of colour and emotion that includes the musicians and singers - a show that's definitely worth braving a stiff wind off the lake to get to the theatre.

• Esmeralda Enrique, Manuel Soto; Guitarists in back ground. José Valle "Chuscales", Nicolás Hernández





• **Juan Ogalla**

Toronto Artists:

Esmeralda Enrique: Artistic Director, Choreographer, Dancer

Dancers: Paloma Cortés, Ángela del Sol, Ilse Gudiño, Noelia La Morocha:

Nicolás Hernández: Musical Director, Composer, Arranger, Guitarist

International Guests from Spain:

Juan Ogalla from Cádiz: Choreographer, Dancer

José Valle "Chuscales" from Antequera: Composer, Arranger, Guitarist

Niño de Elche from Elche, Alicante and Manuel Soto from Jerez de la Frontera: Extraordinary singers who join the company for the first time.

Flamenco has shaped my life's history. It is my great passion. Through flamenco I find truth, beauty and goodness.

- Esmeralda Enrique

ESMERALDA ENRIQUE SPANISH DANCE COMPANY presents the world premiere of
Espejo de Oro / Mirror of Gold
choreographed by Esmeralda Enrique and Juan Ogalla
part of Harbourfront Centre's NextSteps
2010-11

Thursday November 25 - Sunday,
November 28, 2010
Saturday at 8 PM, Sunday at 3 PM
Harbourfront Centre's Fleck Dance Theatre,
207 Queen's Quay West, 3rd Floor
Tickets: \$25-\$41 (Discounts for students,
seniors, CADA and NextSteps subscribers)
Box Office: 416-973-4000 or visit
www.flamencos.net



• **L-R - Ilse Gudiño, Angela Del Sol, Juan Ogalla, Esmeralda Enrique, Noelia La Morocha**

Posted by Anya Wassenberg at 7:47 AM 

Labels: [esmeralda enrique](#), [flamenco](#), [fleck dance theatre](#), [harbourfront](#), [Juan Ogalla](#), [spanish dance in toronto](#), [toronto dance scene](#)

CBC HERE AND NOW

LIVE: FRIDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2010 @ 17:23

ESMERALDA ENRIQUE SPANISH DANCE COMPANY: Espejo de Oro/Mirror of Gold.

GUEST: Here & Now's dance critic MICHAEL CRABB

HOST: Toronto's Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Company opened its annual season at Harbourfront Centre last night with a new work called *Espejo de Oro/Mirror of Gold*.

The show combines live music, singing and dance to evoke the evolving tradition of Spanish flamenco. Our dance critic, Michael Crabb, was at last night's opening and joins me now to tell us about it.

Hi Michael. [Hi ...]

***Espejo de Oro/Mirror of Gold*.**

I sense a metaphor in that title!

MICHAEL: And correctly so.

Over the years Esmeralda Enrique has presented many different aspects of her Spanish dance tradition.

On some occasions she's branched out in innovative ways to collaborate with dance artists from other traditions to explore how flamenco might relate to, for example, the dance styles of India or to tap and jazz.

But for this show the focus is very Spanish, very flamenco – it's rhythms, it's spirit, more than anything it's "duende," it's soul.

However, it's framed theatrically and thematically by an idea.

Esmeralda Enrique's approach is a world apart from what you might call the commercialized kind of flamenco – the kind of castanet-clicking stuff you might find in a Spanish night club or cabaret – designed to satisfy the expectations of tourists.

Flamenco, after all, began as a dance of the people and has never been rigidly codified.

So, as Enrique sees it, flamenco is always an evolving form that reflects changes in society and in the people who perform it.

HOST: You mentioned that this new work is framed by an idea. What is it and how is communicated in the piece?

MICHAEL: Well, there is a gold-framed mirror on stage – assembled, for good reason as we later discover – from mirrored tiles. And at each front side of the stage, there are cut away corners of a gold-framed mirror.

At the start of *Espejo de Oro* a man, Spanish guest artist Juan Ogalla, enters and stares pensively into the mirror. What he sees is more than a superficial image.

As some effective back video effects suggest, he sees beyond the surface. He sees a reflection of his inner self. The rest of the work flows from this idea – of exploring beyond the surface to discover and express the soul within, which is very much what flamenco is about.

And those fragments of mirror at the front of the stage I took to suggest that as an audience, we are also being invited to look beyond the surface, to find something of deeper, perhaps even spiritual meaning.

HOST: And I guess the real question is, does it work?

MICHAEL: Yes and no. Along with this idea of the mirror as a reflection of the soul, Esmeralda Enrique has also worked in the theme of the bullfight – again, more or less metaphorically, as a way of looking at a tradition that some hold very dear while others, especially nowadays, consider almost barbaric.

But there were times when this thread seemed a precarious way to link together a succession of dance numbers.

Flamenco is essentially an expressionistic form, an intensely personal expressionistic form which means it's not particularly good at carrying big ideas or narrative.

Later in the show, when the mirror reappears, this time with its tiles all askew, I was scratching my head trying to figure why.

But I should say, I do think it makes a difference whether you come from a Spanish tradition or not. And there's nothing odd about that. I'm sure there's a lot of nuances that flew right over me, particularly since my Spanish is rudimentary at best.

Being able to understand the songs would add a whole other level of meaning.

HOST: What about the actual quality of performance?

MICHAEL: Terrific. The dancing, the music the singing.

In fact, you can easily enjoy this performance at that level alone. When Esmeralda Enrique dances a solo, her arms weaving unfurling patterns in the air – or when Juan Ogalla cuts the air with whiplash turns or sounds an intricate tattoo with his tapping feet, you can simply enjoy it for what it is.

A personal expression of feeling.

HOST: OK. But before you go, I notice Esmeralda Enrique is not the only dance event at Harbourfront Centre this weekend. Montreal's Rubberbandance Group opens there tonight at the Enwave Theatre.

MICHAEL: Yes, it's odd how these things end up over-lapping and then we can go for weeks without anything. Anyway, based on past experience, I'd say Rubberbandance is not to be missed if you like dance that really moves out and defies almost every category.

HOST: How so?

MICHAEL: Victor Quijada, the man who founded Rubberbanddance eight years ago, comes from an unusual background.

He grew up with hip-hop in Los Angeles, then moved to New York and immersed himself in ballet and contemporary, finally ending up with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in Montreal.

But he was searching for something that brought together all his interests and found it in a style of dance that blends urban funk and street dance with the precision and virtuosity of what I guess you'd call art dance – and what's really interesting is that Quijada often choreographs to concert hall composers such as Prokofiev, Vivaldi and Stravinsky.

It's a strange and improbable hybrid but it's also gripping to watch. This new show he's bringing to Toronto is called *Loan Shark* and it's a good chance to see the variety of Rubberbandance's work because it's drawn from pieces Quijada has made for other companies. Almost a Rubberband sampler.

HOST: Sounds good. Thanks Michael.

THE DANCE CURRENT - A DANCE MEDIA GROUP

March 15, 2007

In Search of Flamenco Puro

Escencia Flamenca by Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Company

By Bridget Cauthery

Sometimes a period of absence—or abstinence – can result in the acquisition of new perspective, allowing one to view a performance with fresh eyes and ears. Other than short pieces performed at various festivals and as part of fundraising galas around the city, I had not been to dedicated evening of flamenco in a few years. Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Company’s performance of “Escencia Flamenca” at Harbourfront Centre’s Premiere Dance Theatre from November 16th through 19th, proved to be a joyous reunion, reminding me just how incredible and infectious good flamenco can be.

Enrique – a constant presence on the Toronto flamenco scene since 1982 – produced an evening of finely wrought pieces intended to the collaboration of guitarist, singer and dancer, united to evoke the distinctive sounds and rhythms of Andalusia, the birthplace of the form. To illustrate her point, Enrique chose to open her show with a work for five dancers choreographed to Spanish composer Isaac Albeniz’s haunting “Leyenda.”

Originally scored for piano in G minor, “Leyenda” was transcribed for guitar by Francisco Tarrega. This most famous fifth movement in Albeniz’s “Suite Espanola” (Op. 47) with its delicate, intricate melody and abrupt dynamic changes has made it a staple in new flamenco repertoire. Enrique’s dancers glided expertly through the work, showing off sculptured arms, elongated torsos and expansive upper bodywork. Though well known for the high quality musicians with whom she chooses to work, Enrique and musical director and long-time collaborator Nicolas Hernandez outdid themselves with the addition of guest guitarist Jose Luis Valle (“Chuscales”) and guest vocalist and percussionist Francisco Javier Orozco (“YiYi”). In calo, the language of the Spanish Rom, “chusco” means the crunchy end of the bread; hence the nickname Chuscales refers to a person who is a “guitar-cruncher.” Hailing from a family of professional musicians and dancers and schooled by internationally recognized Spanish flamenco guitarist Paco de Lucia, Chuscales’ clarity and command both masterfully complemented the dancers and roused fellow musicians.

Born to an Andalusian family in Barcelona, vocalist and percussionist YiYi played the dark horse at the start of the program, his slight frame and reticent demeanour providing a contrast to the more ebullient guitarists at his side. Before long, however, it became clear that in accompanying the solo dances and performing sections of pure music, his skills were exemplary. With only a splash cymbal, oversized conga and a Cajon (Spanish for “crate,” “drawer” or “box”) a kind of resonant box drum played by slapping, his powerful, bone-chilling voice and incredibly fast hands riveted the

audience. At times YiYi seemed almost embarrassed by the audience's enthusiastic response, yet his playing and singing were nothing short of electrifying. Equal to Enrique's choice of musicians was her selection of guest dancer Ramon Martinez. Not since I attended the Festival Flamenco Internacional de Albuquerque in 1999 and saw the incomparable Alejandro Granados perform have I seen a male flamenco dancer of such new talent and virtuosity. Though younger and more flamboyant than Granados, Martinez channelled equal levels of self-possession and machismo, leading the musicians in a merry dance that had the audience on their feet before the intermission.

Last in Toronto as a soloist with Paco Pena Flamenco Dance Company in February, Martinez strutted about the stage, working the crowd and the musicians with his lightning fast taconeo (heelwork) and bravado. With his weight well back over his heels and his chest thrust forward, Martinez kept the rhythmic dialogue between him and the musicians on a thin edge, testing the limits of his speed and their chops. Part trickster and part suave Don Juan; Martinez let his audience in on his con, demonstrating both his consummate skill and comedic wit. Towards the end of his solo, Martinez drew out violinist Vasyl Popadiuk who followed the dancer's antics, producing sounds like a slide whistle on his violin. Unfortunately Martinez proved less savvy when paired with either Enrique in their duet or with the ensemble in the closing number. (Interestingly both pieces were choreographed by Martinez.)

Of all of Enrique's dancers, the young and versatile Ilse Gudiño deserves special mention. Haughty and beautiful, her clean lines, elegant brazeo (arm work) and floreos (handwork) pursed lips and frowning expression were captivating. Though less fierce in her attack than fellow dancers Angela del Sol and Renata Palmo, Gudiño's interpretation and subtle variations were peerless in ensemble sections.

Costumes by Mary Janeiro and Jane Townsend were surprising in their palette – rich watermelon pinks and brilliant greens, earthy browns and navy blues – but extremely flattering and feminine in their silhouettes. Combined with Sharon DiGenova's bold lighting design, the swirl of the costumes washed the stage with colour and shadow – though at times it was clouded over with dry ice.

Through her choice of collaborators, choreography and presentation, Enrique ably demonstrated her gift for flamenco puro. Though occasionally sentimental, the performance avoided the melodrama characteristic of many modern flamenco works in favour of crisp, unadulterated movement and staging. Enrique herself, in her solo *Inquietudes*, was all smooth edges and poise, giving the audience glimpses of her power in intense bursts of zapateado (footwork) and serpentine pirouettes, before deftly tightening the reins. The program as a whole was of an exceptionally high quality, and left the audience buzzing – proving without a doubt that Enrique and her company are still very much at the top of their game.

TORONTO STAR – WHAT’S ON

November 16, 2006

FLAMENCO’S MIX OF JOY, GLOOM

**Layering of two emotions comes from interplay of dance,
music and song, says artist**

By Susan Walker

Look up the word “flamenco” and you’re bound to find more than you could fit on an index card. Encyclopedia entries run on for pages, defining terms and origins. You could say that flamenco’s openness to influence is what most defines it. The elusive essence of flamenco is the theme of the show that Toronto’s Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Company presents this week at the Premiere Dance Theatre.

Flamenco rhythms and chord progressions, says Enrique, “are what make Spanish music sound Spanish.” Classical composers such as Isaac Albeniz were drawn to the power, the rhythms and that mysterious quality of “duende,” something both magical and dangerous, associated with flamenco.

In flamenco, the dance, the music and the song are inseparable. A dancer such as Enrique, born and first trained in San Antonio, Texas, can pick up the rhythms in any music and adapt her steps and movements to it. This ability to improvise is part and parcel of flamenco performance. Enrique showed her flamenco artistry as she danced to the music of David “Fathead” Newman’s jazz band in August at the Toronto International Dance Festival.

When you’re a flamenco dancer, you’re always studying rhythm, she says, “as I do on a daily basis.” All music, loud and percussive or soft and lilting, has a rhythmic structure. In flamenco, the rhythms are based on a 123-beat or an 8-beat bar, broken down into phrases either in sixes and threes, or fours and twos. Where things get complicated, she says, is “when the accents are irregular, or reversed.”

Flamenco’s homeland is the Spanish province of Andalucia, where gypsy, Moorish and Sephardic influences blended to create a flamenco culture in the late 18th and early 19th century. Flamenco styles from different regions of Andalucia are identified by the rhythmic structures they favour.

“It is a three-way participatory art form,” Enrique says. “How the singer sings the song is important to how we (dancers) become connected. How he feels as he’s singing will influence how we dance and vice versa. Our feeling influences him.”



Traditionally the singer made up the lyrics spontaneously. In the case of a well known song or cante, the singer might vary it by choosing a new rhythm, with the dancers expected to respond accordingly.

Enrique's guest singer and percussionist Francisco Orozco, known as Yiyi, comes from Spain and has frequently performed with the company as singer and percussionist over the last six years. "He is quite amazing as an all-round artist," says the dancer and choreographer. "Technically it is quite difficult to sing and play with a whole battery of percussive artists."

It is the singer who is most responsible for that eerie sound that makes flamenco an art characterized by its expression of happiness tinged with deep sadness or longing, or conversely, sadness in which as element of celebration or happiness can be found.

The juxtaposing of male and female is another form of counterpoint that distinguishes flamenco. Enrique notes that the strength and power of the male dancer is contrasted with the soft lines of the female's flowing arms and skirts. The women also express power, of course, but in the way associated with the character of Carmen. After seeing Spanish dancer Ramon Martinez perform earlier this year with the flamenco guitarist Paco Pena, Enrique invited him to work with her dancers and perform in her fall show. He'll do a solo and dance a duet with her.

As a soloist, she says, "he is quite remarkable. There are so many sounds in his footwork, and such clarity." She and Martinez will dance a solea, a form most people would associate with flamenco. "It begins with a very slow rhythm, which picks up and gets quite intense."

Enrique's shows tend to sell out; so fervent is the following for her flamenco styles. But it's not too late to acquire the taste for a distinctly Spanish sound that maintains its heart-tugging appeal, despite constant exposure to and absorption of other musical forms.

TORONTO STAR – A&E

December 12, 2003

Fiery flamenco conjures up Cadiz

By Susan Walker

Cadiz, on the southern tip of Spain next to the Straits of Gibraltar, is considered to be the oldest city in the Western world; having been settled by the Phoenicians in 1100 B.C. the first Spanish constitution was signed there. And, sometime after the arrival of the gypsies in 1450, Cadiz became a centre of flamenco music, dance and song, summoning up the spirits of those ancestral Andalusians, Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Company presents Cadiz: Heart of Flamenco at the Premiere Dance Theatre until Sunday.

Setting the scene with a tribute to the Cadiz composer Manuel de Falla, the musicians usher in the dancers with an arrangement of de Falla's lyrical *Concion del Fuego Fatuo*. The dancers, first two, then five, slowly come to life like visitors from the past.

If this company was forced to perform from behind a chest-high wall, not much would be lost, for so much Enrique's choreography is in the upraised and delicately expressive arm and hand movements.

Dancing *la Caleta*, described in the program notes as a promenade along the sea wall, Paloma Cortés, Angela del Sol, Catalina Fellay, Ilse Gudiño and Renata Palmo are statuesque figures, pounding rhythmic patterns with their feet in answer to the clapping and drumming of the musicians. Following a musical interlude – a performance of Nicolas Hernandez's *A la Sombra de la Catedral* by an ensemble of guitarists, percussionists, and flutist and a violinist – guest dancer Antonio Granjero makes his solo appearance.

For all that flamenco is a dance form defined by the hard-shoe stamping of foot against ground – as if it derived from a will to claim the land where the gypsies settled – Granjero is amazingly light on his feet.

He's like Ali in the ring, seeming to rise in the air between staccato footwork so rapid his legs start to blur, like the blades of a moving propeller. Dancing his own choreography, a piece that translates as, "This is more than life," Granjero looks like a matador confronting his fate. He walks away from the stage, sheds a jacket or catches his breath and returns, approaching centre stage like an athlete about to perform a feat of strength.



A banner with a purple and red background. On the left, the name "Esmeralda Enrique" is written in a large, gold, serif font. To the right of the name, in a smaller, gold, sans-serif font, are the words "SPANISH DANCE COMPANY & ACADEMY OF SPANISH DANCE". The background of the banner shows a person in a red dress, possibly a flamenco dancer, in a dimly lit setting.

Esmeralda Enrique

SPANISH DANCE COMPANY &
ACADEMY OF SPANISH DANCE

Granjero eschews the macho bearing of most male flamenco dancers. His dancing is all it takes to establish his bravado.

Another guest from Spain, singer Francisco Javier Orozco “Yiyi,” sings an emotional tribute to Cadiz-born singer Enrique El Mellizo, accompanied by Hernandez on guitar and Chris Church on violin.

Enrique makes her entrance in a dramatically crimson bata de cola (dress with a train), to dance a cantinas in her elegant, less-is-more fashion. Finally, the whole company joins in a performance of Cadiz Eterna, a tribute to the city itself and a history steeped in passions.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

November 24, 2001

Spicy flamenco with Arabic flavours

Reviewed by Rebecca Todd

It's said that nobody doesn't like flamenco. Certainly the sellout crowd at Toronto's premier Dance Theatre Thursday night – flamenco cognoscenti and novices alike – loved the Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Company.

Al-Andalus, the company's newest work, packs a lot of firepower, boasting such international flamenco talent as legendary gypsy singer Jesus Montoya and Mexico Citybased favourite, dancer Raul Salcedo. And because Al-Andalus is a tribute to Spain's Arabic cultural heritage, the show also features Toronto-based musicians Ernie and Maryem Tollar and dancer/choreographer Roula Said, who specialize in Middle Eastern musical traditions.

Al-Andalus is a tribute to the three cities that flowered between 711 and 1492 as capitals of cultivated and multicultural Andalusia – Cordoba, Seville and Granada. To open the show, Said performs a solo dance inspired by a famous mosque in Cordoba, accompanied by Ernie Tollar's ney flute and Maryem Tollar's matchless voice. The patterns of Said's costume echo patterns on Moorish architecture, and her hands, hips and fluid torso evoke arabesques and arches.

Three flamenco musicians and six dancers soon join Said and the Tollars. The flamenco dancers percussive attack and sharp angles contrast Said's soft circularity, though their hand gestures describe curves that reflect Said's dance. All of the artists work in a common rhythm cycle, which holds the dance together. The compelling texture weaves together contrasting qualities of the two traditions, rendering their common lineage tangible. It would, however, have been satisfying to spend longer in this transitional space and see more of Said. The dance soon ends with symbolic duet between Said and Salcedo, which highlights the masculine and feminine extremes embodied in their traditions. From this point on, the show moves into the realm of Spanish culture.

The bulk of the show's second section, dedicated to Seville, is a solo by Salcedo performed in a dialogue with Montoya and the other flamenco musicians. In this section, the only reminder of the show's Arabic beginning is heard in Montoya's voice, which rises and falls in distant kinship with Maryem Tollar's. Salcedo, who looks like the lean son of a Mexico City bullfighter that he is, moves like a knife, and Montoya's song challenges the virtuoso Salcedo to point of exhaustion. Watching this private musical duel is like eaves dropping on a scorching jam session.



A banner with a purple and green background. On the left, the name "Esmeralda Enrique" is written in a large, gold, serif font. To its right, in a smaller, gold, sans-serif font, are the words "SPANISH DANCE COMPANY & ACADEMY OF SPANISH DANCE". The background of the banner shows a person's hands in a dance pose, with one hand raised and fingers spread, set against a dark green background.

Esmeralda Enrique

SPANISH DANCE COMPANY &
ACADEMY OF SPANISH DANCE

The last third of the performance, dedicated to Granada, the last Moorish capital to fall to Catholic Spain, features a beautiful, melancholy and rhythmically intriguing solo performed by Esmeralda Enrique, followed by an all-out jam. Said and the Tollars return, and the two sets of musicians take turns introducing themes from their traditions. The flamenco dancers let loose in unison, leaving audience adrenaline levels high.

As usual, the show brought the capacity audience to its feet. Enrique has effectively drawn attention to the Arabic roots of Spanish culture, while putting on the kind of exciting virtuoso show she's known for. Still the relative weight of the Spanish-derived dance and music was heavy in relation to the Arabic. As a result, the talents of the artists working in Arabic traditions seemed underused.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

December 4, 2000

Fiery Flamenco Old and New

By Deirdre Kelly

There are a host of reasons why flamenco never seems to fall out of fashion.

Much of it has to do with the dance form's association with Spain and all the sunny, sultry, spicy things that come along with it.

It's also a complete entertainment: musicians, singers, dancers, dramatic costumes and crazy, polyrhythmic clapping that sets off a kind of primal response in the viewer.

But there is one more thing that makes flamenco so irresistible, something that Toronto's Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Company brought to the fore during its performance at Premiere Dance Theatre on Friday night: the way the dancers – who in this company range in age from 16 to 60 – give themselves up completely to the dance. It's fascinating to watch. Esmeralda Enrique, director, choreographer and principal dancer of the troupe, had all eyes upon her as she took to the stage to dance *Sin Rienda*, a premiere that exalted the unbridled energy of flamenco dancer.

She started slowly, clearly articulating the hell-toe co-ordination of her stamping feet. Her hands were like small, exotic birds, bursting into flight. The fingers fanned and weaved. The wrists somersaulted slowly round and round. A thunderclap of virtuoso dancing ensued; with legs moving furiously fast beneath ruffled skirts lifted to show off the fancy footwork. A short pause as the dancer regained composure, and then a new series of bravura moves, performed at a faster clip, and then another after that performed faster still. Enrique, her eyes blazing, her forehead creased with deep lines of concentration, seemed suddenly no longer of this world, lost as she was inside a dance whose frenzy had consumed her whole. It was terrifying and also commanding of respect; so rare is it to see a dancer completely possessed by her art. Enrique was like a maenad reborn.

But she was not alone in her fury. Though there were other works – among them *Poeta*, a revival of Enrique's 1999 tribute to Spanish poet Rafael Alberti – the biggest excitement of the evening lay with guest artist Raul Salcedo. The Mexico City native brought the house down with his impassioned solo performance, *Esencia*, accompanied by the remarkable flamenco singer, Jimenez "Carancha."

Salcedo, is a tall, elegant performer, who captivated by the sheer vigour of his fluent command of various flamenco styles. *Esencia* doesn't have a set of choreography. The dance, which included his brother, flamenco artist Marco Salcedo, clapping out a complicated time pattern behind him, instead provided him with a framework to show off his improvisational skills – much like a tap dancer riffing alongside a group of musicians.

His dancing was sweet anguish, but masterful and awe-inspiring. Salcedo, is part of the new generation preserving the vitality of flamenco.

THE TORONTO STAR

June 7, 1998

A Burning Passion for Flamenco

By Susan Walker

A Spanish dancer's education is a lifetime proposition for mind and body. The untutored viewer can therefore be excused for a sense of "if you've seen one, you've seen them all."

After a bit of exposure to the form, however, a watcher begins to discern a few differentiating marks. The distinctive feature of the Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Company, especially in its program last Thursday at the du Maurier Theatre Centre, is its classicism.

Enrique might modestly claim to be the first lady of Toronto's Spanish dance community, having established her company and pedigree in 1982. The company now maintains an almost year-round schedule of performances. New works have been honoured with a Dora nomination and critical praise. The company's mainstay remains its rigorous approach to flamenco puro and classical Spanish dance flavoured with choreography that often borrows from contemporary non-Spanish forms. For its last outing before appearing at the Canada Dance Festival in Ottawa, Enrique presented a cross-section of Spanish dancing, heading it Flamenco Passion. Nothing too daring here. No theatrical scenes, no off-the-wall merging of dance forms or styles. Just solid, classical flamenco singing (Marco Marin) and dancing by six classically profiled dancers: Paloma Cortés, Angela del Sol, Mari del Sol, Catalina Fellay, Ilse Gudiño and Cristina Taranco.

Besides Enrique, Angela del Sol was the only performer to appear solo, and acquitted herself beautifully in *Café de Chinitas*, a new work based on a poem by Federico Garcia Lorca and loosely depicting the life of a bullfighter.

Showcasing her own talents in Solea, Enrique displayed intricate footwork and Kathak-like hand, and arm gestures. If there's a limitation to the classical mode, it's balanced by the intensity of the dance.

THE TORONTO STAR

September 19, 1996

This Flamenco's a Movable Feast

By Susan Walker

Flamenco dancers may abound in Toronto, but none of them gets as much stage time as Esmeralda Enrique Spanish Dance Company.

The company dances in parks, at the Harbourfront Hispanic festival, at theatre benefits. The dancers have even appeared on the same program as jazz musician Joanna Jordan.

Tomorrow and for performances on Saturday and Sunday, Enrique and company will have the Betty Oliphant stage to themselves.

The program is called "Duende." In the folklore of flamenco, it means the spirit that inhabits the dance. "Possessed" is not too strong a word for what happens when a flamenco dancer is taken beyond the earthly plane.

A teacher of flamenco since 1982, Enrique likes to link ancient and contemporary. To the gypsy traditions of flamenco she'll add new moves, inspired by the music she's chosen.

"We try very much to keep up with trends in Spain – showing how rhythms are being turned around," says Enrique. "Sometimes I find a piece of music that stirs something in me and I think about how I would interpret it." Such was the case with a new work called *Voz de Mujer*, or Woman's Voice. As Enrique explains it, "It's based on the struggles of the Spanish woman in contemporary society, caught between the traditions that restrict her and modern ways" hence the veils employed by the seven women dancers.

Tientos/Tangos is something else again, a duet Enrique created to express the alternate attraction and repulsion between two lovers. She'll dance it with Sabas Santos, a dancer from Monterey, Calif. who is much in demand on this continent.

Flamenco is known for its variety of traditions, including singing and instrumentals. When one or two dancers take the floor, the others would clap and sing in encouragement. Thus evolved a choral style that Enrique has adapted to the new work. A percussion passage in the program, says Enrique, is borrowed from the drumming done during Holy Week processions.

She's no slave to tradition. "We were the first to use a violinist," she says. Guest guitarist Paco Fonta joins the company for this program. A Spaniard much employed in the U.S., he plays on Gloria Estevan's recording of "Cuts Both Ways."

Nicolas Hernandez on guitar, violinist Monica Fuentefria and dancers Paloma Cortés, Angela del Sol, Mari del Sol, Catalina Fellay, Maya Leon, Cristina Taranco and Paula Videla make up the remainder of the company.



A banner with a purple and black background. On the left, the name "Esmeralda Enrique" is written in a large, gold, serif font. To its right, in a smaller, gold, sans-serif font, are the words "SPANISH DANCE COMPANY & ACADEMY OF SPANISH DANCE". On the right side of the banner, there is a close-up photograph of a person's hands in a flamenco dance pose, with fingers spread and palms facing each other.

Esmeralda Enrique

SPANISH DANCE COMPANY &
ACADEMY OF SPANISH DANCE

It takes a lot of energy to stay alive on a flamenco stage. But youth is not an automatic advantage. “As wine ages and gets better, so do flamenco dancers,” says Enrique.

For the last two fall concerts, the company has been selling out. And Enrique’s classes grow each year with flamenco’s increasing popularity. It's no surprise to the Spanish-born performer, who sees the dance form as a unique vehicle for individual expression.