

REVIEW OF ENTRESUEÑO

Peter Norton Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway at 95th Street, NYC,

August 9, 2006

ENTRESUEÑO
an evening of FLAMENCO

FEATURING
Edwin Aparicio Jesús Montoya
Eli "La Truco" David Castellano
Óscar Valero Pedro Cortés
Genoveva Guinn Ricardo Marlow

*** WASHINGTON DC ***
Fri. Aug. 4, 8:00pm/Sat. Aug. 5, 8:00pm
GALA Theatre/Tivoli
3333 14th Street NW
Tickets \$35
Call: 1.800.494.8497 or visit:
www.boxofficetickets.com/flamencoaparicio

*** NEW YORK CITY ***
Wed. Aug. 9, 7:30 pm
Peter Norton Symphony Space
2537 Broadway at 95th Street
Tickets \$40, \$32, and \$25
Call: 212.864.5400 or visit:
www.symphonyspace.org

*** CHICAGO ***
Thu. Aug. 10, 8:00pm/Fri. Aug. 11, 7:30pm
Harold Washington Library Center
Cindy Pritzker Auditorium
400 South State Street
Tickets \$30, \$35 at the door
Visit: www.ticketweb.com and search for
venue Harold Washington Library

Paul Fradin, Producer
Edwin Aparicio, Artistic Director, Principal Dancer
Eli La Truco, Dancer
Nelida Tirado, Dancer
La Genoveva, Dancer
Pedro Cortés, Musical Director, Guitar
Ricardo Marlow, Guitar
Jesús Montoya, Cante
David Castellanos, Cante

Have you ever wondered how a flamenco dance company structures a production? I hope to open a door into that world through interviews of the principals involved and what I experienced sitting out in the audience. It takes vision, it takes hiring the right professionals to flesh out the vision, and the full cooperation of all involved: producer, dancers, musicians, stage hands. It takes..... four days? That's how little time they had to rehearse. Let's begin.

Interview with Edwin Aparicio



FB: How did you come up with this concept?

EA: Entresueño...it's hard to translate this word into the English language. I tried to represent that state of the dream cycle where you're not sure if you are awake or

dreaming. As you are drifting off to sleep and re-winding the day's tape in your mind, you struggle to make sense of the faces and places that take up an unnatural residence in your thoughts. In between the minutes (or is that hours?) of the closing and opening of the eyes, there are things you see that could only be the unsettling fabrication of your mind. The choreography had to reflect that. This production took two months to develop, but only four days to rehearse.

FB: How did you get everyone involved? What were you looking for in your performers?

EA: I have hired what I consider to be the most professional people in the U.S. I need to like them first as people. How you are on the outside, that's how you are on stage. Then, they need to appeal to me as performers. For example, Jesus Montoya is a powerful singer, and we have worked together on many occasions. La Genoveva is a dancer of great strength from Texas who lived in Spain for many years. Pedro Cortés is one of this country's best guitarists. David Castellano was raised in a flamenco-saturated environment. I met Eli La Truco through my mentor, La Tati. Eli was working in La Tati's company. Each individual involved in this project could command a show on his/her own merit. They've built up their professionalism by spending time in other companies and on their own projects.

Let me add further: they (the performers) need to be immersed in the Spanish culture in order to be effective. You must know what you are doing, technique-wise. You have to speak Spanish to understand the cante and go beyond that, you have to understand the flamenco culture as a whole. Some American dancers won't take the extra time researching what that culture is really all about. They'll say, "Will this choreography look good on me? I want to be famous!" Forget it. (Breathes deeply) Look, I'm a teacher too, and it's not about the workshops or the resumes that list tons of teachers. You need to know someone who knows more technique than you, but at the end of the day you enhance your own footwork by practicing. The most important thing here is to learn about the cante and the guitarist. You, the dancer, are the conductor of an orchestra.

FB: When will you be coming back to the New York?

EA: I hope to come back with Entresueños. I would like to make it a cyclical event. This is a project that will be in continual development. Can I tell you what my favorite thing about NY was?

FB: What was your favorite thing about NY?

EA: The audience!! To have New York give you a standing ovation, it's a lot!! It's a more energized audience, and more appreciative, because of the flamencos that are there.

FB: Where are you going after this? EA: After this? I'm due for a well-deserved vacation. (Laughs) I will be teaching a master class of technique and choreography in Washington, D.C. in November 2006. For more details, tell your readers to visit www.dcflamenco.com or www.flamencoaparcio.com.

Edwin's footwork is the classic medical textbook example of how brain and body neuro-pathways are designed to work. Watching him reminds you to pinch yourself you're not dreaming his performance. I've known Edwin Aparicio for years, and stand in awe of his progress and growing maturity.

In the section titled La Penumbra, the entire cast danced to the hauntingly beautiful strains of the Nana, which would turn into a Bulería, then into a Cartagenera, back to the Nana. Each would take turns embodying different portions of the same dream; the stage lighting was as much of a protagonist as were the dancers. In one section, snapshots of the three bailaoras, backs facing stage left, faces/bodies flush forward on a sharp diagonal as the choreography would lull and speed up. A collective gasp was heard at one point when they moved backwards every time the lights went out and back on, keeping the same stance. It's happened to all of us, no? In a state of exhaustion, we shut our eyes for just a moment, and when we open them we discover the scenery has changed.

In the Solea por Buleria, La Genoveva stepped onto the stage in a vibrantly yellow dress, a fluidly clean dancer. In dreams, colors are more vivid than they are in real life, don't you think? She floated out and she floated back in as she repeated the same choreography danced minutes before, but with subtle changes. Edwin Aparicio shared with me that the lighting of a flamenco show is crucial to its success. If the lighting design is not there, and the sound is not there, you're dead in the water. Edwin worked on the conceptual material as well as sound and lighting cues with D.C. friends Lisa Scott and Alexei Kulikov. Edwin states "I have yet to meet a sound engineer that understands the issues unique to flamenco, and those performers on stage need to hear themselves and each other. We as artists suffer when we cannot get our feet "mike'd properly".

The spotlight on La Truco making her bed, sliding off her shoes and kissing her stuffed toy marked the beginning of the Alegria, her limbs dancing with a refreshing playfulness. This was to remind us of the innocence and ease of children drifting off to sleep. Wouldn't we all be better off if we could fall asleep

like that, I thought to myself. In glides Edwin stealthily from the other side of the stage embodying a tensile yet gentle strength, the lighting arrestingly highlights his angular and graceful form all while picking up La Truco's shoes and dancing with them. Is he the man of her dreams, or simply a man in her dreams? He is a powerful force and a calming influence to watch.

The audience was easily led into a vulnerable and highly suggestive state of mind that night, held captive by virtue of the plaintive, poignant sounds of Pedro Cortés' original score. His sound is quite unique. I can't do it justice by dropping a few adjectives here and there.

Interview with Pedro Cortés



FB: Pedro, the beginning cords are so evocative, how did you come up with these melodies? Was it the concept that inspired you? Was it the choreography that moved to you to write this? Give me an insight to your process...

PC: When I got there to the development meeting, I really didn't know what to expect. That happens in any prospective job. What I strive to do when I am hired for a project is to delve into the mind of the artist by asking questions. What is the expectation here, and so on? Then, I start composing, and my style is to bring a modern and up-to-date approach to flamenco. In my opinion, the words "traditional flamenco" limits you. I have no problems playing it, but understand that what was traditional in 1972 is not what is considered traditional now. What I mean by this is that it is a coined phrase, and that everybody uses it without really knowing what it means.

FB: Can you elaborate on that?

PC: The definition of what is traditional flamenco is an ever-evolving thing. Flamenco is what it is at the moment you are playing it, be it in 2006, or as it was in the '70's. When an artist wants "traditional", I ask them in the style of what? I know what was traditional for my grandfather, and what was traditional for my father. I may ask an artist, "Do you want me to play in the style of Antonio Canales, or in the style of Carmen Amaya?" I also know how to play in the style of Sabicas, for example, because I was exposed to that early on in my life. Now, what you see in Spain is truly tradicional....

FB: I never thought of it like that.....

PC: I don't go around seeking applause. My job is to bring out to the public the reality of what is in the mind of the artist. What creates tradition is what is being used at the moment. When I am asked about the era of the music, I simply respond let's employ what is being used as of now. The real issue here is the ability and capacity of the musicians and artists involved. For example, the music of the 1970's was easier rhythmically, it was easier to understand. Now, it's about transitioning, and transitioning is always a journey, especially when you are speaking of flamenco.

More information on Pedro Cortés can be found at www.canastero.com

Eli La Truco is the other member of the team who had a hand in the conceptual choreography. She shared with me that one of her stock and trade dances is the Taranto, a "dense" palo, heavier musically than an Alegrias. It is in this author's opinion that La Truco translated that heaviness into the Alegrias escobilla brilliantly. This was featured in the "La Aurora" portion of the show. The beginning of the escobilla, which dancers usually attack at a rapid pace, took its time here. It fit the concept of this

performance. Dreams often go in slow-motion. La Truco made ample use of the thunder-like sound of the ball of her foot. My mind grasped to complete the step for her, from memory, yet when she completed it in real time it took me by surprise, that it made complete sense. It was like experiencing the breaking of the sound barrier, but in reverse. La Truco is such an organic dancer, dancing very close to the earth, a deep crouch in her legs and is not afraid to get her hands dirty. Her hips seem to come out of joint, her sculpted body accented by arms seemingly bent at impossible angles. After the show, I chased La Truco into her dressing room....

Interview with Eli La Truco



FB: Welcome to NY, Eli, what do you think of New York audiences?

ELT: Thank you! Excellent -- I am overjoyed and was pleasantly surprised at their warmth and attentiveness!!

FB: Is this your first time in NY?

ELT: Yes, it is. I danced two years ago in Washington, D.C. with Edwin, but this is my first time in this city, and I believe it is a huge accomplishment for me.

FB: Where did you train?

ELT: Well, in a dance preparatory/conservatory school where I graduated at 17 years old with a Degree in Spanish Dance, and afterwards continued on in Amor de Dios in Madrid with a succession of teachers. All who want to become professionals in flamenco must go to Amor de Dios, you understand?

FB: Did Edwin approach you directly about Entresueños? Did you go to him?

ELT: We have come to know each other well these past few years, through the class of the teacher we have in common, "La Tati". A great chemistry and bond was born between us. We started working with each other about two years ago, and by then, he suggested that I start giving workshops out in Washington, D.C. I also helped him with the formation of his dance company. It was Edwin who approached me with this project.

FB: Will you be giving workshops in New York?

ELT: I have to go back to Spain to attend to projects I have there, but yes, I am considering coming back here to teach, as people are expressing their interest in me. In the meantime, you can visit my website at: www.latruco.com.

I took off again, running behind the artists, tape recorder in hand, jumping in between the dressing rooms. How reporter-like of me. I got a hold of David Castellano, one of New York's notable flamencos. David is another one who is maturing at a rapid pace, and singing worldwide, I might add. I notice it in his breath control and especially in his timing.

Interview with David Castellano



I've been busy with the recording of the new CD with my group, Manué www.manuemusic.com. It's a fusion of flamenco with latin rhythms, rock, etc.. Also, keeping pretty busy working with Edwin, of course.

FB: Since I last spoke to you, where have you been studying? Or, are you picking up knowledge as you work?

DC: Mostly tablao gigs and I'm learning a lot with Jesus (Montoya). He's been kicking my butt, he's real tough.

FB: So, how does he kick your butt?

DC: How? He is tireless and doesn't stop. It's letra after letra. You know, I am just a couple of pages. He has years of experience, and he is chapter after chapter. It's really good, because he's teaching me a lot. He demonstrates how it's supposed to be done. A lot of people have been telling me that my cante is improving. Personally, I have been going through a bit of a rough patch in my life, and it looks like its showing up in my voice.

FB: That's a good thing, David. You're bringing something to the audience they can identify with.

Now, on to the guy that's giving David Castellano's backside a work-out

Interview with Jesus Montoya



FB: Jesus, give me your thoughts about the process an artist goes through when he's developing the music that will back-up a dancer. Is it due to the experience that you have personally? Something else?

JM: Well, there has to be a solid connection between the dancers and the guitarists as well as the singers. They depend on us, and count on us to back them up. This is to say then it is important to work with good artists. What I have observed here is that artists want quality singing but are not willing to pay for it. Then, what I will see are student performances or locals doing shows, and often times it's

disastrous. You could be the worst dancer, but if you have great back up (musicians), you'll look totally fierce!! If you are the best dancer in the world, and have poor-quality musicians behind you, it's completely distasteful. It's very important to have the full cooperation of all the people involved, strong, competent people, to bring about a show like this. La union hace la fuerza ...in unity there is strength.

FB: Because of your vast experience, do you correct the dancers or the guitarists you work with?

JM: All the people I work with do listen to what I have to say. At 40 years of age, my colleagues do recognize I have paid my dues. The dancers trust me because it's between the guitarists and me to give them feedback. We're observing them from the point of view in the background. I will suggest "let's do the introduction in this way", or "what do you think about the musical breaks here and the letra at that point"? Between the guitarist and myself there must be complete communication at all times.

FB: I understand the importance of the letra, and what is the difference between working in a tablao and a production such as this one?

JM: The difference is that in a theater, we are easier to listen to. In a tablao, it's more spontaneous, we do more things. In a theatre, it's bigger, it's easier to bring out the drama, we can elongate the letra, and we'll go slower with it because it's a completely different setting.

FB: Why do you live here and not in Spain?

JM: I have been living here for the past 21 years. Thank God we have had a good run in this country. I have worked with Jose Greco, Maria Benitez, La Tania, Yaelisa Caminos Flamencos, Omayra Amaya and now with Edwin Aparicio. Also, I was involved in "Ainadamar, Fuente de Lagrimas" (Fountain of Tears) this past January 2006 at Lincoln Center. You can obtain the CD at Tower Records. I also have another CD out "Sentimiento Gitano", and you can order it by visiting my website at: www.jesusmontoya.com.

FB: A lot of the teachers will tell students, you want to get better? Go to Spain. All the professionals are in Spain...

JM: Wrong page! We have great artists here!! Just because they're here, let me tell you they are very well prepared. The thing is, you have to look for them, and you must be willing to pay them!! People want mucho, bueno y barato, a lot of something for nothing; it's not going to work like that. There is a lot of professional jealousy everywhere you go. There are a lot of people teaching that never had any business teaching in the first place. [FB says OUCH] First, they need to go learn themselves before they teach anybody else, and pity the poor student who pays them and has no idea what they are getting for their money.

I followed the crowd to a restaurant (Mama Mexico) where the artists and respective entourages got a chance to sit down and be serenaded by lusty-voiced mariachis. Ah serendipity, there was Nelly Tirado (see www.nelidatirado.com), sitting in front of me! We chatted about the distinction between what is danced in a tablao and what is performed in front of a theatre audience. There is a distinction between a person who can dance at a fiesta, dance at a tablao, and it may not necessarily translate into being able to dance in front of a theater audience. There is a safety zone – you are not necessarily connecting with any one person, and there is a sensation of dancing on a large plane. This is not to say that she didn't connect with the audience at Symphony Space that night, because she very well did. The phrase child-bearing hips is used in a derogatory tone nowadays. On Nelly, it is for celebration!! She makes full use of the roots of flamenco in the undulation of her hips and hands and arms, reminiscent of belly-dancing

and very Andalusian. There, the female form is celebrated, capable of sustaining life. In the Taranto titled "Latidos" yet another spectacular moment in this production: the thumping of the human heart played on the Cajon by Gonzalo Grau, Nelly slowly turned, gathering her dress to her heart, looking stage right, her whole body drawing deep, long breath.

I say, well done, Paul Fradin, producer extraordinaire of Entresueños. Truly a class act!