

JACOB'S PILLOW

PRESENTS

COMPAÑÍA IRENE RODRÍGUEZ

Ted Shawn Theatre

June 26-30, 2019

DIRECTOR, PRINCIPAL DANCER
& CHOREOGRAPHER

Irene Rodríguez

DANCERS

Mariana Ramos
Teresa Álvarez
Mayrelis Ávila Ruiz
Keyla Rodríguez
Yohan García
Josué Rondón

MUSICIANS

Andrés Correa (Cantaor)
Reynier Llorente (Guitarist, Composer)
Alejandro Truffin (Percussionist)
Josué Rondón (Percussionist)
Joel Ramírez (Saxophonist)

LIGHTING & SOUND DESIGNER

Fernando Alonso

MANAGER, COSTUMES
& PRODUCER

Irene López

COSTUME DESIGNER

Irene Rodríguez

PROGRAM

EL MITO

CHOREOGRAPHY Irene Rodríguez

MUSIC Noel Gutiérrez

PERFORMERS Irene Rodríguez and Company

Inspired by Plato's Allegory of the Cave.

Audience and UNEAC Award in the Concurso de Danza del Atlántico Norte "Vladimir Malakhov" 2017.

Awarded in the International Choreography Contest of the XXIV International Meeting of Ballet Academies in 2018.

HOMENAJE A JOSÉ GRECO

PERFORMER
& LYRICS Andrés Correa

MUSIC David Acosta

Homenaje is tribute to legendary flamenco choreographer and dancer José Greco, who is known for popularizing Spanish dance on the stage and screen in 1950s and '60s America. In 2018, people around the world celebrated the centennial of his birth and we extend that honor here, with deep admiration to him and his legacy.
-Irene Rodríguez

LA PENA NEGRA

CHOREOGRAPHY Irene Rodríguez

MUSIC Noel Gutiérrez

PERFORMERS Irene Rodríguez and Company

COSTUME DESIGN Jesús Villalonga and Irene Rodríguez

Inspired by the poem "Romance de la Pena Negra" by Federico García Lorca.

Premiered and commissioned by Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival (August 2017).

EL GRITO (World Premiere)

CHOREOGRAPHY Irene Rodríguez

MUSIC Reynier Llorente and David Acosta

LYRICS Andrés Correa

PERFORMERS Irene Rodríguez and Company

Inspired by El Grito by Edvard Munch.

Commissioned by Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival 2019.

- INTERMISSION -

Jacob's Pillow is committed to providing an environment that cultivates the celebration of the art of dance and its positive impact on community.

While in our theaters, please refrain from behavior that could disturb other patrons and performers during the performance. We ask that you: silence your cell phone; do not photograph or video record performances; keep your ticket with you at all times; observe that food and beverages are not allowed, with the exception of water; and please let a staff member know if you need help. Thank you for observing these House Rules so that everyone can have an enjoyable experience.

ENCIERRO (U.S. Premiere)

CHOREOGRAPHY	Irene Rodríguez
MUSIC	David Acosta and Reynier Llorente
LYRICS	Andrés Correa
PERFORMERS	
TORERO	Yohan García
BRAVE BULL	Irene Rodríguez
BULLS	Mariana Ramos Mayrelis Ávila Teresa Álvarez Keyla Rodríguez

Inspired by the Encierros de Navarra and bullfighting in Spain.

The Encierro is an annual event in the festival of San Fermín in the city of Pamplona, Navarra, Spain. The event is a bull run that brings bulls from outside the city to the urban bull ring. Bulls are released from their corrals and travel through the city streets in chase of runners who lead them to a bull ring. Once the bulls have charged into the bull ring, the bulls are raffled to be fought by toreros, or bullfighters.

As the bull and torero face one another, a shadow of death covers the arena. The dangerous art of bullfighting is an active debate between two life forces: the man and the bull.

*Ay... la muerte...
Se enfrentan en el ruedo
dos corazones valientes:
uno lucha por su vida
y el otro por dar la muerte.*

*Ay...ay...
Está la plaza repleta.
Está ya la suerte echada.
Está la muerte esperando
a que venga la cornada.*

CAMINOS (World Premiere)

MUSIC	Reynier Llorente
LYRICS	Andrés Correa
PERFORMERS	Musicians of Compañía Irene Rodríguez

ENTRE ESPINAS, ROSAS

CHOREOGRAPHY	Irene Rodríguez
MUSIC	Musicians of Compañía Irene Rodríguez
PERFORMERS	Mariana Ramos Mayrelis Ávila Teresa Álvarez Keyla Rodríguez

A CONTRA TIEMPO (World Premiere)

CHOREOGRAPHY Irene Rodríguez and Yohan García

MUSIC Reynier Llorente

PERFORMERS Yohan García
Josué Rondón

AMARANTO

CHOREOGRAPHY Irene Rodríguez

MUSIC Noel Gutiérrez, based on "Soleá de Aida" by Juan Parrilla

LYRICS Andrés Correa

PERFORMER Irene Rodríguez

COMPANY

ABOUT IRENE RODRÍGUEZ

Director, Prima Ballerina, and Choreographer, Irene Rodríguez is the leading figure of Spanish dance in Cuba. A member of the International Dance Council (UNESCO), she earned a Bachelor of Theater Arts Degree (Acting) from the National University of Arts (Instituto Superior de Arte, Havana, Cuba), receiving the "Diploma de Oro" in theater arts, an honor bestowed for her numerous roles as an actor. She also received a Master's Degree in Theoretical Studies of Dance from the same university.

Born in Havana, she graduated in 1999 as a professional performer of Spanish dances. After graduating, she immediately joined the Ballet Español de Cuba, where she became Prima ballerina in 2007, as well as the Choreographer and Specialized Professor and Regisseur of First Level. For several years, she has worked as a Professor of the Cuban National Ballet School and a choreography consultant of the Cuban National Ballet, specifically for Prima Ballerina Assoluta Alicia Alonso's Spanish works. On several occasions, she has performed as a guest dancer with the Cuban National Ballet.

She has performed as Prima Ballerina in the most prestigious theaters in Barcelona, Granada, Andorra, Colombia, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, and Mexico, where she has shared the stage with world-renowned artists.

In January 2012, she founded her own company, Compañía Irene Rodríguez, receiving rave reviews since the Company's debut. As a dance professor, she plays a role in training many of the professional Spanish dancers in Cuba. She has given master classes and conferences both nationally and internationally, and has created several works for distinguished companies. In 2014, she created her own dance school, the Irene Rodríguez Spanish Dance Academy.

Rodríguez has received numerous awards, including the First Prize in the VIII "Alicia Alonso Ibero-American Choreography Competition" (CIC' 2012); an award from the Author's Foundation of the Spanish General Society of Authors and Editors (SGAE) for her work *El crimen fue en Granada*; the Choreography Award in 2006 from the Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas

de Cuba for best female artistic interpretation 2006-07; the Ramiro Guerra award for the best interpretation in 2011; the Excellence Choreography Award in 2016 for the best choreography work at the International Ballet Schools Competition; the Ibero-American Medal given for the Honoris Causa Foundation from the Guadalajara's University in Mexico; and the Audience and UNEAC Award in the North Atlantic Choreography Contest "Vladimir Malakhov." Among many accolades, Rodríguez was recently awarded the Order Isabel la Católica, the highest recognition given from Spain's King.

In the U.S., she has performed at the Montalvo Art Center, MOLAA, the Moore Theatre, The Joyce Theater, and The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C., among others. She is featured in the PBS documentary "Weekend in Havana." Since 2012, by special request of the Prima Ballerina Assoluta Alicia Alonso, she holds the post of Artistic Director of the International Festival "La Huella de España," a very important annual event in Cuba.

MARIANA RAMOS (Dancer) was part of the first group of dancers to graduate from the Professional School of Spanish Dance of Compañía Irene Rodríguez. Ever since, she has been a member of the company. She is also a teacher of the company's vocational and professional schools.

TERESA ÁLVAREZ (Dancer) had extensive experience in Spanish dance before she decided to pursue a dance education in the Professional School of Spanish Dance of the Compañía Irene Rodríguez. She is now a member of the company and teacher at the vocational school.

MAYRELIS ÁVILA RUIZ (Dancer) has been a Spanish dancer for many years and danced professionally with Habana Compás Dance. She currently performs with the Compañía Irene Rodríguez.

KEYLA RODRÍGUEZ (Dancer) graduated from the Professional School of Spanish Dance of Compañía Irene Rodríguez. Since graduating, she has been performing with the company.

YOHAN GARCÍA (Dancer) graduated as a dancer/teacher of Spanish dances in 2011. He is currently a member of the Compañía Irene Rodríguez and teacher of the company's vocational and professional schools.

JOSUÉ RONDÓN (Dancer & Percussionist) graduated as a dancer/teacher of Spanish dances. Since its creation, he has been a member of the Compañía Irene Rodríguez as both a dancer and a musician.

ANDRÉS CORREA (Cantaor) is of high regard in the flamenco music community. In his many years of experience, he has worked with the Spanish Ballet of Cuba and the flamenco company Ecos, among other companies recognized in Cuba. He currently performs with the Compañía Irene Rodríguez.

REYNIER LLORENTE (Guitarist and Composer) graduated from Amadeo Roldán Conservatory in Cuba, specializing in Classic Guitar. He has performed with dance companies such as Ballet Español de Cuba, Ecos, Alma Flamenca, A mi aire, De Rocío, and Kiuban Flamenca. He is a founding member of the Compañía Irene Rodríguez and one of its principal composers.

ALEJANDRO TRUFFIN (Percussionist) studied percussion and played professionally for dance companies and groups like Azahares, Alma Flamenca, Habana Concuerta, Cuarteto de Voces D'Capo, and Ballet Español de Cuba. He has been a member of Compañía Irene Rodríguez since its creation.

JOEL RAMÍREZ (Saxophonist) graduated from Amadeo Roldán Conservatory in Cuba, specializing in saxophone and clarinet. He participated in the *Horns to Havana* project and performed in the Foundation Preservation Hall. He has also played the annual jazz band competition at Lincoln Center, Essentially Ellington, and played with the National Symphony Orchestra. He currently plays the saxophone with the Compañía Irene Rodríguez.

IRENE LÓPEZ (Manager) studied economics and worked at the National Institute of Technology and Environments at the Cuban Sciences Academy for 39 years. She is the mother of Irene Rodríguez and has been the manager of the Compañía Irene Rodríguez since its creation.

FERNANDO ALONSO (Light & Sound Designer) is a lighting design specialist who has extensive experience with many companies both in Cuba and abroad. He worked with the National Contemporary Dance Company in Cuba and now works with Compañía Irene Rodríguez.

In conjunction with her engagement in the Ted Shawn Theatre, Irene Rodríguez is the Director of the Flamenco and Spanish Dance Program at The School at Jacob's Pillow.

The Program is supported by the Cultural Office of the Embassy of Spain.



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PILLOWNOTES

by Brian Schaefer

The PillowNotes series comprises essays commissioned from our Scholars-in-Residence to provide audiences with a broader context for viewing dance.

No country as geographically close to the United States feels as far away as Cuba. Despite, or maybe because of, this simultaneous proximity and distance, the two countries have spent the past century in an ever-shifting, co-dependent, antagonistic relationship. Under our last president, we went in one direction; under this president, we've headed in another. So how does an American begin to better understand our mysterious Communist neighbor to the south? Well, here at Jacob's Pillow, our lens is dance. And three Cuban dance companies give us three distinct snapshots.

The first is the imposing official company of the state. In 1948, the Havana-born prima ballerina Alicia Alonso—who trained at the School of American Ballet, danced with American Ballet Theatre, and performed at the Pillow in 1955—co-founded a small dance company, which became the National Ballet of Cuba after Fidel Castro's revolution. It has since become the primary ambassador of Cuban dance to the United States. (As a young dance student in San Diego, I observed them at close range as a wide-eyed supernumerary when that company came to town with *Don Quixote*.) Its system of government support, as well as the company's regal style and repertory, mirror the ballet of Cuba's then-patron, Russia.

The now 98-year-old Alonso and the national company maintain an outsized influence on dance, and dance training, in Cuba. They have produced some of the great international ballet dancers of recent times, and the company's affiliated, tuition-free schools across the country have made ballet almost as national a pastime there as baseball. In a sense, they offer us a Soviet-flavored, Socialist-tinged snapshot of dance in Cuba. But just as Cuba has started to open up economically in the decade since Raúl Castro took the political reins from his late brother, so too has it begun to evolve artistically.

(A similarly significant changing of the guard in dance occurred in May when prima ballerina Viengsay Valdés was appointed deputy artistic director of the National Ballet and assumed many of the roles of director, even as Alonso remains a figurehead.)

The second snapshot is a modern upstart that visited the Pillow four years ago—Malpaso Dance Company, a contemporary dance troupe founded in 2012. Its dancers, many trained at the national ballet school, draw from modern and classical idioms, use jazz, pop, and Afro-Cuban music (among other sonic backdrops), and perform work from a roster of homegrown and foreign choreographers. (Here, they brought a new work by Trey McIntyre, co-commissioned by the Pillow.) Malpaso represented a newly outwardly-looking Cuba at a moment of great possibility, and continues to showcase its growth and evolution with frequent visits to New York.

And third is our returning guest this year: Compañía Irene Rodríguez, another young company that provides a very different look at contemporary Cuban culture, one that nods to its colonialist past, but that also speaks to the mixing of styles and music, and paints a multi-faceted portrait of the island's influences. It, too, was founded in 2012 by a young, talented, and determined dancer who is the company's founder, director, star, and namesake. Rodríguez and her company made their Pillow debuts in 2017.

As a child, Rodríguez started off in ballet classes at the Andalusian Cultural Center of Havana, but then wandered down the hall and fell in love with Spanish dance. When she was just 11 years old, she was invited by Eduardo Veitia, the director of the Spanish Ballet of Cuba, to take lessons with the company. Five years later, she was a member of that troupe's corps de ballet. She then rose through the ranks and ultimately established her own company to present her brand of theatrical Spanish dance.

"I am focused on creating new trends that make the Spanish genre evolve, fusing it with everything that will extend the stage language, such as dramatic arts, current contemporary dance trends, national rhythms, and everything that will allow the tradition and modernity of an international genre to merge with our own very Cuban way of facing it," Rodríguez has said.

"Spanish dance" is a broad category that is composed largely of flamenco, but that also includes elements of bolero and other regional dances. It is surprising, given that Spain ruled Cuba for over 400 years until the end of the 19th century, that, language aside, its cultural mark feels relatively muted. The cuisine of Cuba features few quintessential Spanish dishes and so too with the dance: The Spanish Ballet of Cuba was only founded in 1987, but there appears to be growing interest in the form.

"It's wonderful to have this explosion in our country, of little girls and moms... asking you when and where Spanish dance lessons are taught," Rodríguez explains. "It is wonderful because you realize that Spanish culture and Spanish dance are in their blood. But that doesn't mean there's a lot to choose from."

And that doesn't mean that the Spanish dance in Cuba is pure imported flamenco, either. Rodríguez insists that it is not. True flamenco, she says, "is entirely improvised." Her work is carefully choreographed, responding to dramatic themes—like the writing of the great Spanish poet Federico García Lorca—and incorporating other dance styles and theatrical elements to offer a kind of modern flamenco-theater that embraces, but just as often eschews, tradition. You'll see Rodríguez in a red, ruffled dress, sure. But you'll see her dance in black pants, too.

The return of Compañía Irene Rodríguez to the Pillow is yet another snapshot of the diverse island nation, and, in some ways, of this particular moment in U.S.-Cuban relations. In this case, like a classic Polaroid photo in development (the technological contemporary of the bright mid-century Chevys that prowl Havana), we have yet to see exactly what this moment means. All we can do is keep collecting impressions, adding to our understanding of Cuba—one dance company at a time.

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Brian Schaefer is a New York-based journalist who writes about dance, culture, and politics for a number of publications, including The New York Times.