

A Palo Seco

flamenco company

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Rebeca Tomas
Artistic Director & Choreographer

Pedro Cortes
Musical Director

“Awesomely fiery.”
-*New York Times*

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ABOUT THE COMPANY

A Palo Seco is a New York based Flamenco Company that strives to develop a unique voice, employing their Flamenco expertise, while also taking into account the context in which they live. Their work aims to expose people to an innovative way of looking at Flamenco, combining traditional techniques with a modern, metropolitan flare. Run by artistic director and choreographer, Rebeca Tomas, the company debuted its first production in May 2010 at Theatre 80 St. Marks (New York City). The production was described as "a feast for the eyes and the ears" (Lindsay Miller, Theatre On-Line), and reviewed by several press sources, including the New York Times. Jack Anderson, for the New York Theatre Wire, wrote, "Tomas is seeking to develop Flamenco in new ways." The company has continued its yearly New York City season at Theatre 80, as well as appearing throughout the U.S. at the at venues such as 2012 the Chicago Flamenco Festival and Jacob's Pillow. Tomas and company have also been featured as guest artists at the NYC Between the Seas Festival of the Mediterranean in the summers of 2011, 2012, and 2013.

"A Palo Seco" is a phrase that refers to a bare-bones style of flamenco music, often consisting of singing or percussion alone. This stripped-down aesthetic has become a central theme in artistic director Rebeca Tomas' choreography, characterizing her biggest departures from tradition, while also rooting her work in the emotional rawness that lies at the heart of the art of Flamenco.

"A Palo Seco' as a whole was truly a feast for the eyes and the ears."

(Lindsay Miller, Theater Online)

"Flamenco with Soulfulness and a Burst of Springtime." (Gia Kourlas, NYTimes)

"The artists in A Palo Seco: Rasgos Flamencos go far beyond showcasing their great musical and dance talent—they offer the experience of being transported by something deep and powerful stirring inside. It's a level of expression that can't be faked, and that no amount of technical perfection could replace. Melancholy, pride, and raw passion—expression we've become unaccustomed to seeing offered without apology—burst out in wailing song, heart-racing rhythm, and impossibly fast footwork. It's a performance that requires fearlessness, the rendering of body and spirit complete." (Megin Jimenez, NYTheatre.com)

"Tomás and her company know their flamenco, yet they're willing to play with its conventions."

(Jack Anderson, NYTheatre Wire)



A Palo Seco

Flamenco Company

THE COMPANY: ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Rebeca Tomas
Artistic Director, Choreographer, Dancer

Rebeca Tomas has been deemed by the critics "awesomely fiery" (New York Times), "masterful" (Eva YaaAsentawaa), and "a postcard image of the feminine Flamenco dancer" (Kansas City Metropolis). After years of freelancing as a solo dancer and company performer with such companies as Soledad Barrio & Noche Flamenca and Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana, she began to create her own work and, in December 2009, founded A Palo Seco Flamenco Company. With the company, Tomas has presented numerous critically acclaimed productions in New York City and throughout the country.

In addition to directing and performing with her company, Tomas continues to work throughout the country as a solo dancer, instructor, and choreographer. Her choreography credits include assistant to the Tony Award-winning Choreographer Christopher Gatteli in Lincoln Center's production of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, as well as in Gatteli's own *In Your Arms*. She was a guest choreographer for R.evolución Latina's Choreographer's Festival and choreographed the group's piece at the Broadway Cares 25th Annual Easter Bonnet Competition. Tomas also served both as choreographer and personal Flamenco trainer for Yaron Zilberman's indie drama *A Late Quartet*, released this past November 2012, which features Christopher Walken, Catherine Keener, and Philip Seymour Hoffman. Presently, she is participating in the Groundwork Residency offered by Cora Dance, in the support of creating a new piece to spoken word.

Tomas is a two-time recipient of the Jerome Foundation's Travel and Study Grant (2008, 2010) and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's MCAF Grant (2011, 2013) for her company productions. She was also awarded the 2011 Artist Fellowship Grant from the CT Commission on Culture & Tourism. As a dancer, she placed first in the annual competition at the XIII Concurso Nacional de Flamenco in Albuquerque, New Mexico (2010).

Rebeca began her formal dance training in Granada, Spain at Maite Galán's Escuela de Danza Española and later moved to Madrid, where she studied at the internationally renowned Flamenco Academy Amor de Dios. She has also studied in Sevilla, focusing on Bata de Cola (long-train dress) technique. Prior to her dance career, Tomas received a B.A. (magna cum laude) at the University of Rochester. Throughout her undergraduate career, she studied piano at the Eastman School of Music.

"This New York flamenco artist is both a devoted traditionalist and a restless experimenter. She respects the achievements of her art, yet is eager to stretch its boundaries.... Whether they are formally traditional or experimental, all of her dances may be fierce, for Ms. Tomás, though physically tiny, can be awesomely fiery." (Jack Anderson, NYTimes)

"When she swept onto the stage for her alegrías solo... Ms. Tomás was like a burst of springtime. Wearing a flowing dress in pinks and purples and flicking her long ruffled train like a mermaid's tail, Ms. Tomás contrasted her winsome spirit with a more serious display of prickling footwork that rooted her into the floor with an earthy power." (Gia Kourlas, NYTimes)



"Compact, spring-loaded, and finely trained" (The New Yorker)

"a masterful flamenco dancer... Tomás holds nothing back... she's truly a well-crafted explosive device." (Eva Yaa Asantewaa)

A Palo Seco

Flamenco Company

THE COMPANY: MUSICIANS

"It's hard to choose one artist to single out, as their performances are closely entwined and they are all, simply, so good." Megin Jimenez, NYTheatre Wire

Pedro Cortes, Musical Director & Guitar

Pedro Cortes is the third generation of a family of Spanish Gypsy guitarists. He uses the experience passed down to him by his family to maintain the purity of Flamenco while creating new and original compositions. He began his studies with his father and the esteemed Flamenco guitarist Sabicas and began touring professionally at the age of 17. He premiered his work *En la oscuridad de las minas* at the Teatro Albeniz in Madrid, and in 1992 he had works premiered by Carlota Santana's Flamenco Vivo Dance Company at the Joyce Theater in New York. He was commissioned by Zorongo Flamenco to write a score for a dance drama called Garden of Names, which was inspired by the novel of Lawrence Thornton's called "Imagining Argentina". He also wrote music for a children's program on H B O called Fairy tale for Every Child.



Mr. Cortes has toured with Jose Greco and Maria Benitez, and has performed with such artists as Farruquita, La Tati, Merche Esmeralda, Manolete and the late Lola Flores. He has been guest artist with the St. Louis Opera and the New York Grand Opera, and served as Musical Director with the Guthrie Theater In Garcia Lorcas *Bodas de Sangre*. Mr. Cortes is artistic director of his own Flamenco Fusion group Amanecer Flamenco De Hoy, and also Musical Director of Membre Y Vareta and Zorongo Flamenco . He has two books on Flamenco, *El Dron del Faraon* and *Cruzando el Charco*, published by the American Institute of Guitar.

"Dazzlingly deployed virtuosity paced like capriciously gathering storm..." Jennifer Fisher , Los Angeles Times

Alí Bello, Violin

Venezuelan born Alí Bello is a versatile violinist whose music education started in "El Sistema" (The National System on Youth Orchestras of Venezuela). In the mid 90's Alí traveled to New York for college and received Bachelor and Masters Degrees in Music Arts. His talents include classical music, jazz, pop, R&B, middle Eastern, flamenco, and the many styles of South American music. He has recorded, performed, toured, and collaborated with music figures from Tito Puente to Jay-Z as well as performed in Music Festivals in U.S., England, Australia, and The Caribbean Islands. He has played with the Latin Jazz Coalition, the Fania All-Star Band, and Orquesta Broadway as well as leading his own Afro-Latin groups, the Sweet Wire Project, and his Latin Jazz sextet The Jazz Liaisons.



A Palo Seco

Flamenco Company

THE COMPANY: MUSICIANS (cont'd)



David M. Castellano, Voice

From Cuban and Spanish decent, David is a self-taught singer who has established himself in the United States as one of the country's top flamenco singers. He began singing and playing professionally at the age of 20. His worldwide performances include a variety of musical venues and theaters in places such as Mexico, Paris, India, Russia, Puerto Rico and Israel. His talent has led him to perform with great artists such as Pilar Rioja (The Queen of Spanish Dance), Middle Eastern pop fusion group - Alabina, Omayra Amaya, Nelida Tirado and Carlota Santana Flamenco Vivo as well as television spots and commercial compositions.

Barbara Martinez, Voice

Barbara Martinez was born in Venezuela to a family of artists and grew up in New York City where she began performing in opera, off-Broadway and film at the age of 10. An equally proficient dancer, Barbara currently works with a variety of Flamenco companies and world music groups, including her own fusion group, which appeared at Carnegie Hall in 2010. She has performed in jazz, world music and flamenco festivals in the U.S., Panama and Canada, as well as The Metropolitan Opera. Barbara is an honors graduate of Brown University and studied at the famed Cristina Heeren Foundation in Seville on scholarship. She currently teaches music at Bank Street School and Ethical Culture School, and teaches flamenco dance at Manhattanville College. Barbara can be seen performing regularly in New York City venues.



Jose Moreno, Percussion

Born into a family of famous flamenco artists Estrella Morena (dancer) and Pepe de Málaga (singer), Jose began his flamenco career at age 6 under the guidance of his parents. After his debut at the famous Tablao Costa Vasca in Miami, Jose continued his studies with the Great Manolete, Farruquito, and Andres Marin, studying Cajon with Manuel Soler. Jose has worked with distinguished artists such as The Great Manolete, Joaquin Ruiz, Pastora Galvan, El Pecas, Jose Cortes "Pansequito", Isabel Pantoja, David Bisball, Omayra Amaya, and more. In 2001, he choreographed and performed a collaborative work with his mother Estrella Morena, appearing with the renowned flamenco singer Carmen Linares and the New World Symphony Orchestra at Lincoln Theater in Miami. He has also appeared at the annual Panama Jazz Festival and at Carnegie Hall in New York City.

A Palo Seco

Flamenco Company

THE COMPANY: DANCERS

"The dancers convey a sense of spontaneous expression, sparks of fire, while remaining in full control over the complicated syncopation." Megin Jimenez, NYTheatre Wire



Sol "la Argentinita," Dance

Sol "La Argentinita" was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, later relocating to New York City where she began her Flamenco career. Since 2008 she has danced with the internationally renowned company Soledad Barrio and Noche Flamenca in numerous tours and productions, sharing the stage with figures such as Soledad Barrio, Alejandro Granados, and Alfonso Losa. She has also appeared with the Metropolitan Opera in Zeffirelli's production of La Traviata, and at New York City's Town Hall for the World Music Institute's 20th Anniversary Celebration. Sol is a two-time recipient of the Cristina Heeren Foundation scholarship as well as a recipient of the Jerome Foundation's Travel and Study Grant. Sol teaches classes for children and adults in NYC, including residencies with Alvin Ailey and Young Audiences.

"Sol la Argentinita harnessed the art form's power with her seductively aggressive "Solea," in which her elegant carriage provided space for tension and relief." Gia Kourlas, NYTimes

Marina Elana, Dance

Marina made her performance debut at the age of fifteen with Theatre Flamenco of San Francisco and continued with the company for three years. Since then, she has appeared with La Monica's Pasion Flamenca, Maria Benitez's Teatro Flamenco, and Caminos Flamencos, performing in premier venues along the West coast. Since summer 2012, she has performed and toured with the world-renowned company Soledad Barrio & Noche Flamenca. Marina began training in ballet at a young age and delved into flamenco soon afterward. She began her studies in Spanish classical dance and flamenco with Adela Clara and continued her training with La Mónica and Yaelisa in the San Francisco Bay Area. She has also studied in Sevilla and Madrid with Yolanda Heredia, Rosario Toledo, Concha Jareno and Maria Juncal.

"Elana dances a slow burn in a dark velvet dress, her exquisite hand movements offering hypnotic grace in opposition to the steps furiously marking complex beats below." Megin Jimenez, NY Theatre Wire



A Palo Seco

Flamenco Company

THE COMPANY: DANCERS (CT'D)



Laura Castellano, Dance

A New York City native, Laura began studying dance at the age of six. She has studied extensively, both in the U.S. in Spain, with such figures as Andrea Del Conte, La Repompa de Malaga, Raquel Heredia, El Farruquito and La Farruca. She has danced with Carlota Santana's Company, Andrea Del Conte's Company and Omayra Amaya's Company. These esteemed companies have taken her to many theaters and festivals throughout the US. Laura Castellano can be seen dancing in various "tablaos" in the New York City area where she resides.

"Laura Castellano makes exquisite use of her arms and hands, seemingly describing better, more perfect worlds in the air." Megin Jimenez, NYTheatre Wire



Leslie Roybal, Dance

Leslie Roybal began her career at age 5 performing with a Mexican folkloric dance company. After earning a BFA in Theater from Stephens College, she continued her dance education at the University of New Mexico where she studied Contemporary Dance and Flamenco. Proficient in both dance styles, Leslie has performed in New York and throughout the U.S. with companies such as Murray Spalding Mandalas, Fred Darsow Dance, Neville Dance Company, The Metropolitan Opera (in Carmen and La Traviata as well as on tour in Japan), and Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana. Last year, she worked with renowned dancer/choreographer Rosario Toledo in Philadelphia's First Flamenco Festival and with Angel Muñoz Flamenco Vivo's Annual Tour of the Boros. Apart from performing, Leslie leads lecture demonstrations, conducts workshops and Master Classes and gives lectures within the Contemporary Dance and Flamenco ideologies.



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Upcoming Productions & Recent Performance History



FALL 2013

October 11-12, 2013
University of Rochester Meliora Weekend
(performances & workshops)
Rochester, New York

SUMMER 2013

July 27, 2013
The Open Center
New York City

July 28, 2013
“Between the Seas Festival of
Mediterranean Arts”
The Wild Project Theatre- New York City

August 21, 2013
Jacob’s Pillow Inside/Out
Beckett, MA

ONGOING

Every Thursday & Sunday
“The Wine Spot”
New York City

2012-2013

NYC Season at Theatre 80 St. Marks
Multicultural Arts Center (Cambridge, MA)
World Heritage Museum (Lexington, MA)
Le Poisson Rouge (New York City)
Chicago Flamenco Festival (Chicago, IL)
Between the Seas Festival (New York City)
Jacob’s Pillow Inside/Ouwt (Beckett, MA)

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Touring & Repertoire Program Option A: "Rasgos Flamencos"

Rasgos Flamencos

With an eye on both convention and innovation, this production explores the juxtaposition of the raw emotional darkness and the festive playfulness, both essential to the art of Flamenco. The "*Rasgos Flamencos*," or defining characteristics of the art form, are present in both traditional repertoire and in pieces with a more contemporary and individual take on the Spanish art. ***This performance includes live musicians.*** Musicians include: Guitar, Vocals, Percussion, Violin (optional). 3-5 Dancers.

Repertoire/ Pieces include:

El Lenguaje del Abanico: The abanico (Spanish fan) is implemented in an original work that departs from all of Flamenco's structural norms. The abanico takes on the role of a percussive instrument and a sharp visual punctuation. *"Ms. Tomás brandished a Spanish fan, but wielded it like a butterfly knife, lunging from side to side in profile... The stage was alive with sounds: dragging her toe on the floor or tapping the fan onto her chest, she generated her own percussive score." Gia Kourlas, NYTimes*



Martinete: Often referred to as *cante jondo*, "deep song," the Martinete is sung and danced *a palo seco*, a capella with rhythm only and no guitar.

"In "Martinete," Ms. Tomás showed her choreographic exactitude as the three women, their feet on fire, drifted in and out of unison and canon." Gia Kourlas, NYTimes

Tangos: An upbeat style within Flamenco characterized by short *letras*, or song lyrics, which are interpreted interchangeably between dancers.

Farruca: A typically male dance due to its characteristic linear quality and footwork. In this case, the females "wear the pants."

Soleá: A somber and serious style of Flamenco, the *Soleá* is also considered *cante jondo*.

Alegrías: Lively and upbeat, *Alegrías* are typical of the port city Cádiz in southern Spain. Performed here with the traditional *bata de cola* (long train dress).

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Touring & Repertoire Program Option B: “Al Tablao”

Al Tablao

This production features Flamenco in its most traditional format: *el tablao*. Ideal for non-traditional theater venues with more of a cabaret-style feel, this production features some of the company’s most critically acclaimed group numbers, as well as traditional dance solos and musical numbers. ***This performance includes live musicians.*** Musicians include: Guitar, Vocals, Percussion, Violin (optional). 3-5 Dancers.

Repertoire/ Pieces include:

Bulerías “A Palo Seco”: A festive and improvisatory style within Flamenco in which people sing and dance spontaneously.

Sevillanas: A folkloric style of music and dance typical of Southern Spain and often performed with castanets.

Tangos: An upbeat style within Flamenco characterized by short *letras*, or song lyrics, which can be interpreted interchangeably between dancers.

Guajiras: A coquettish piece typical of Flamenco’s *ida y vuelta* styles, which contain influences from Latin America and, specifically, Cuba.

Soleá: A somber and serious style of Flamenco, the *Soleá* is also considered *cante jondo*.

Alegrías: Lively and upbeat, *Alegrías* are typical of the port city Cádiz in southern Spain. Here they are performed with the traditional *bata de cola* (long train dress).



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OUTREACH

Academic & University programming ~ Arts Education

** NOTE: All of the following programs can be carried out independently, or in conjunction with another program and/or one of the abovementioned performance packages.*

Lecture Demonstrations: (tailored to audiences of all ages) The Lecture Demonstration is an interactive way of combining a straightforward Performance, hands-on workshop, and informative explanation about the art, culture and history of Flamenco. In between lively performance numbers, audience members get hands-on experience with playing las castañuelas (castanets), las palmas (rhythmic hand-clapping), and they even learn to dance a bit of Flamenco themselves!

Workshops: (tailored to any age and/or skill level) These individual or back-to-back workshops focus on the essentials of Flamenco dance, including body and hand positions, zapateo (footwork), and palmas (rhythmic hand-clapping). Working with a variety of beats and rhythms, workshop students will learn how each element plays a part within the structure of a solo Flamenco dance. Depending on age, skill level, and number of sessions, participants will learn choreography to recorded music that they will later be able to practice and perform on their own.

School Performances (K-12): A Palo Seco Flamenco Company presents school performances to students of all ages, featuring dance and music in a vibrant and entertaining production full of color,



rhythms, and emotions. Explanations and questions are intermixed with high-energy performance pieces and audience participation. Students learn to play palmas (rhythmic hand clapping) and castanets, and are invited to join the artists on stage to do a short dance number at the end.

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Flamenco Company

ABOUT FLAMENCO

A BRIEF HISTORY

A style of music and dance, as well as a culture in and of itself, Flamenco originated in the southern region of Spain (Andalusia), and took shape as a public art form during the mid-eighteenth century. Born as a result of the unique mixture of cultures and religions that co-existed in Andalusia throughout the centuries, some of Flamenco's most significant contributors include Sephardic Jews, Southern Spanish Christians, North African Arabs and Muslims, and Gypsies who originated in India and settled in southern Spain in the 15th century. Upon their arrival, the Gypsies encountered a repertoire of music and dances, known as Andalusian folklore, which they quickly adopted and to which they added their own distinctive touch (hand-movements, footwork, and complex rhythms). Over the years, these songs and dances continued to evolve, and developed from folklore into what we now refer to as Flamenco. Today, Flamenco continues to mature as an art form and has taken root in many countries around the world, transforming from a traditional Spanish art into a global phenomenon.

WROUGHT WITH EMOTION

Many of the song lyrics and styles within Flamenco were created in an atmosphere of extreme suffering and hardship. From poverty and marginalization, to brutality and expulsion, much of Flamenco is the expression of deep grief and anger, epitomized by styles such as *Cante Jondo*, or Deep Song. The Gypsies, however, also knew how to enjoy themselves and juxtapose their grief against joy and celebration. Styles such as the *Alegrías* or *Bulerías* have a bright and often playful feel to them.

LIVE MUSICIANS

While Flamenco is typically identified by dancers wearing long ruffled dresses, rhythmic footwork, and twirling hands, the Song and Guitar actually predate the dance. Live musicians are central and essential to every Flamenco performance, and it is only through the interaction that occurs between dancer and musicians that the improvisatory nature and spontaneous emotional expression so central to Flamenco can occur.

Instruments most typically seen at a Flamenco show consist of guitar, vocals, percussion (*palmas*- rhythmic hand-clapping, and *cajon*- a wooden box/drum). As Flamenco has evolved, however, many other instruments have been added to the mix, including cello, violin, bass, flute, saxophone, piano, and more.

Company Photographs by:
Niko Alexandrou, Maly Blomberg,
Amor Montes de Oca, Casey Mitchell,
and Lee Wexler

