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100 YEARS OF

FLAMENCO

IN NEW YORK

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IN NEW YORK

100 Years of Flamenco

This exhibit is a love letter to Flamenco in New York City. It presents an intimate portrait of the traveling lives of Spanish and American dancers, many of them women, who came to New York in search of fame, fortune and freedom. This is also the story of a form of Spanish dance – Flamenco – that walks arm-in-arm with ragtime, jazz and hip hop in defining its era and nation. Flamenco is as much a language of expression as a dance of resistance to poverty, injustice, the Spanish Civil War and Spain's Francoist regime. The exhibition tracks the artistic evolution of Americans whose lifelong dedication produced an American School. Like any immigrant form, Flamenco comes of age on new soil, melting into the established rhythms of the city. Today, Flamenco ultimately holds something of America inside.

SPANISH CLASSICAL DANCE VS. GYPSY FLAMENCO

After his 1928 trip to New York City, poet Federico García Lorca articulated the significance of lineage in Flamenco: "From Jerez to Cádiz, ten families of the most impenetrable Gypsy caste jealously guard the glories of Flamenco tradition." Flamenco's roots extend back to Mozarabic Spain, to the Hispano-Arab and Sephardic poetry and singing cultures that lived along the Iberian Peninsula. Originating in Andalusian Gypsy culture in the seventeenth century, Flamenco referred to Gypsy performers, as well as to a style of "authentic" Gypsy dancing, Flamenco.

The Escuela Bolera, or Bolero School, consists of a series of popular dances—fandangos, boleros and seguidillas—that merged with the vocabulary of Spanish ballet toward the end of the eighteenth century. Dances like *La Cachucha*, *El Jaleo*, and *El Vito* symbolized an act of national resistance to French domination. Spanish Classical dancers were invited to America, branded as porcelain-skinned, "dark" beauties, chaste yet desirable—in contrast to dark-skinned Gypsies who rarely left home.

100 Years houses a treasure trove of objects from The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts augmented by private collections. Engravings, drawings, dance treatises, literature and souvenir programs, bear witness to Spanish dancers' forays on New York stages. Sheet music, costumes, shoes, hair combs and shawls embody the dancers' presence. Historic film footage, photography and press reviews draw a rich and varied picture of the language of Spanish dance and the significant role played by New York music and dance critics in shaping American taste.

2

THE FIRST SPANISH DANCERS ON THE AMERICAN STAGE, 1840 - 1900

The physical iconography of Spanishness took America by storm in the 1830s and 1840s. North American cities saw a steady infiltration of Spanish dancers in respectable theaters, variety and burlesque, dime museums, concert saloons, beer halls and pleasure gardens. Savvy theater managers traveled to European music halls to recruit, offering contracts to appear at the Park Theatre, Niblo's Pleasure Gardens, Koster & Bial's, Hammerstein's Paradise Roof Garden and the Eden Museum.

In 1840, the Viennese prima ballerina Fanny Elssler, one of the greatest dancers of the Romantic era, came to dance at the Park Theater. Elssler was the first dancer of her caliber to appear in America. She toured the northeast by railroad, dancing for President Van Buren; Congress suspended its sittings to see her famous *Cachucha* dance. Legend has it that loyal fans repeated the French custom of drinking champagne out of her bolero shoes.

By the 1850s, Spanish dance became a New York craze. Lithography houses like Currier & Ives rushed draftsmen to capture the likeness of the "Spanish" beauties. Sold as covers to sheet music and illicit novels, tightly-corseted, dark-eyed beauties wearing colorful cascading dresses, shawls and hair combs—enduring props of Spanishness — filled New York homes from Gramercy Park to Astor Place.

EN TRAVESTI: WOMEN BULLFIGHTERS ON THE NEW YORK STAGE

After Elssler set the stage with her spicy *Cachucha*, American producer M. B. Leavitt brought Trinidad Huertas, "La Cuenca" to perform at Koster & Bial's in 1888. A skilled pantomimist, "La Cuenca" danced a corrida with cape and sword, using Flamenco footwork to dramatize her movements. By 1894, Carmencita, "the Pearl of Seville," became the first dancer to be filmed by Edison's Vitascope. This rare footage reveals the Spanish Classical style of the late 19th century. Beside hang a series of worn photographs and calling cards from 1890. Carmencita stands, a hat placed on the floor beside her tiny feet. The hat, we are told by castanet maestro José Otero, represents the bull.

SPANISH SOCIETIES

In 1858, New York's first Spanish Benevolent Society was founded. Like the Settlement Houses, these community organizations offered the children of immigrants a place to study Spanish dance and perform. With an upsurge of Spaniards living in the city, Spanish dance satisfied a yearning for home. Mariquita Flores (b. 1916) began training in the Casa de Andalucia founded by her father, and went on to a prominent career as a dancer and teacher.

THE BIRTH OF DANCE ACADEMIES IN NEW YORK

After the American Civil War, Spanish dancers appeared as the "Spanish act" within musical revues such as *The Black Crook* and *Antiope*. By the turn of the century and the arrival of Antonia Mercé, "La Argentina," dancers brought entire companies, training American critics to distinguish stylistic shifts. The root source, Spain, was moved to New York as immigrants opened studios. By the mid-1920s, a homegrown generation of American Spanish dance artists emerged, symbolizing what Americans love best: individualism, improvisation and the absorption of modern dance language into the Flamenco canon.

JAZZ MODERNISM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF FLAMENCO: LA MACARRONA

Gypsy Flamenco absorbed elements of African American jazz/tap at the start of the 20th century. Performing in Spanish nightclubs where silent movies were shown, Gypsies pulled popular African American dances—the Cakewalk, the Charleston and tap—into the Flamenco canon. Flamenco's use of the feet as in hoofin', inwardly-turned knees while walking forward (as in the Charleston) and the erotic sway of the pelvis which

"Everything now is jazz."

La Argentina, souvenir program

Gypsies use to tease and embarrass the audience, demonstrate an incorporation of jazz into Flamenco. Rare 1918 film footage of Juana Vargas "La Macarrona," shows her grounded stance, forward lean, and use of "jazz hands," balanced by Flamenco's majestic, controlled upper body and limbs. While she never danced in New York, her European performances influenced scores of dancers who did, including Leonide Massine, who filmed her.

SPANISH MODERNISM ON THE NEW YORK STAGE, 1913 - 1945

Following the 1913 Parisian premiere of the Ballets Russes' *The Rite of Spring*, Argentina danced in Madrid for Federico García Lorca and members of the Spanish literary and artistic vanguard. Recognized as Spain's first modernist dance artist, she choreographed a radical fusion of Spanish Classical, regional and Flamenco dances, an evolving language of the body. In 1916, composer Enrique Granados invited Argentina to New York to choreograph his new opera, *Goyescas*. She arrived on the heels of the Ballets Russes' New York tour, to discover that the Metropolitan Opera Director had

3

4

given her job to his wife. Argentina quickly mounted a solo concert at the Maxine Elliott Theater. Music critic Carl Van Vechten was in the house, marking the beginning of critical praise for Argentina, not as a sexy señorita, but as an intellectual and a modernist.

In 1928, Argentina returned to New York with the first full-length work of Spanish dance-theater the city had ever seen: *El Amor Brujo*. Argentina brought as her partner Vicente Escudero. A young American Spanish concert dancer, Carola Goya, was in the audience.

American modern dance pioneers Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, influenced by the Orientalist spectacles of the Ballets Russes, were also seduced into learning Spanish dance. In 1922, they created *La Malagueña*, danced by Martha Graham and Ted Shawn and, in 1924, *Cuadro Flamenco*. From the very beginning, Ted Shawn's modernist vision of Spanish dance made it a fundamental component of training at Jacob's Pillow's.

Turn-of-the-century New York began to see home-grown Spanish dancers reinventing what they had seen in theaters. Carola Goya, born Caroll Weller, rose to meteoric stardom in the 1920s. An unlikely Spanish dance artist, slim and reserved—lacking in the necessary passion and sensuous abandon—Goya dyed her hair jet black, donned Spanish dress and honed her dancing skills, traveling to Seville to study castanets with revered maestro Otero. She danced for Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt at the White House.

In 1948, José Greco invited her to join his new company. Maturing as a soloist well into her fifties, John Martin remarked that she "is a warmer and even more gracious artist than she used to be and it is very easy to like her." She met Matteo at Jacob's Pillow in 1953 and left Greco's company. In 1974, they married. She was 68, he 54.

"When I want to jump, I jump!"

"This is Carmen Amaya's gypsy dance" *Life*, March, 1941

Encarnación López Júlvez, "La Argentinita" borrowed from Argentina not only her name but also her repertoire. Argentinita arrived in 1931 to star as an "authentic" Spanish peasant in Lew Leslie's *International Revue*, whose "internationalism" translated into dozens of showgirls in Spanish dresses with trains a mile long. Impresario Sol Hurok was in the audience and, in 1938, lured Argentinita to New York's Majestic Theatre where she premiered with her sister, Pilar López, and Antonio Triana to standing ovations. By 1942, Argentinita headlined concerts of 10,000 fans, raising money for the Navy Relief Society, performing beside Martha Graham, Paul Draper and the Berry Brothers. Argentinita introduced New York to handsome men through the steamy partnership in Spanish dance. After her premature death in 1945, her sister Pilar took over the company, catalyzing the careers of nearly every major male Spanish dancer of the twentieth century.

CARMEN AMAYA AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

With the martyrdom of poet-hero, Federico García Lorca, and the bloody defeat of Republican forces and their democratic allies in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, Spanish artists, especially Gypsies, fled, fearing for their lives. The outbreak of Civil War catapulted the most famous of them all, Carmen Amaya and guitarist Sabicas, onto the international stage. Beloved by American audiences for the torrential rhythm and temper of her dance, Amaya, twice a refugee, first as a Gypsy and second as a Spaniard, was embraced by New York.

"Purely animal," in the words of Walter Terry, Hurok billed her as "The Human Vesuvius." The Amaya clan debuted at the Beachcomber, "home of the Zombie, temple of the conga," in January 1941. Urban legends grew: she grilled sardines in her penthouse suite using cushions as kindling. Dancing atop a drum in pants like Marlene Dietrich, Amaya hammered out Flamenco's hypnotic rhythms, her savage attack and unschooled freedom lent passion and dynamism to the wartime cause.

After the advent of Amaya in New York, audiences grew to expect not a range of Spanish dances, but the Gypsy stylization of Flamenco. By 1955, when Amaya returned, Flamenco was seen no longer

as purely Gypsy, but as what Garcia Lorca had understood it to be: the essence of Spain.

In the words of John Martin, "In our time we have had a handful of great Spanish dancers—La Argentina, La Argentinita, Escudero...we can do no less than add the name of La Amaya to the list."

PERFORMING MASCULINITY: VICENTE ESCUDERO, JOSÉ GRECO, MARIO MAYA, ANTONIO GADES AND ISRAEL GALVÁN, 1932 -2013

The nineteenth century saw the rise of the Spanish female soloist and the exoticizing gaze of New York critics, hard-pressed to distinguish the Spanish *bailarina* from "eccentric" acts on the vaudeville circuit. Argentina and Amaya introduced a feminist rigor and jazz improvisation. Ted Shawn and Charles Weidman, alongside Vicente Escudero, in contrast, absorbed into the modernist platform a preoccupation with masculinity, performing as the *bailaor*, the male dancer in Flamenco.

"For my dances, I found inspiration in Picasso."

Vicente Escudero, Mi Baile, 1947

Escudero, a close friend of expatriate surrealist artists—Pablo Picasso, Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali—introduced Paris to Flamenco with a capella footwork solos in 1922. His rhythmic improvisations, clapping hands, snapping fingers and use of fingernails against a chair or even the floor, distilled traditional Flamenco elements into a sleek, dramatic iconography. In 1932, Escudero, who was to have partnered Anna Pavlova on her NY tour, premiered as a soloist at New York's 46th Street Theatre. Audiences were astonished by the masculinization of what had been viewed as a feminine form.

Escudero attributed the "decline of the male dancer" to a feminization of the sobriety of pure male dancing. Wanting to escape the exotic image of Spanish men, such as Rudolf Valentino, he developed a written treatise on masculinity—a Decalogue of Flamenco—presented in Barcelona with the help of Joan Miró as an artistic manifesto, thereby claiming his place as a modern artist on the international stage. Among the few men Escudero respected was an American, José Greco.

Escudero's single glimpse of Brooklyn-raised José Greco in Helene Veola's dance studio in 1928, catapulted the young dancer to stardom. Greco followed the model of Argentina, Argentinita and Pilar López in presenting a variety of Spanish dances. A sexy, charismatic dancer, Greco was accepted and admired by Spaniards and Americans. In 1948, after partnering Argentinita and Pilar López, he formed The José Greco Spanish Dance Company. Greco became a household name, touring the world for forty years. Following in the footsteps of Amaya, Greco introduced New Yorkers to significant artists, dancer El Farruco and guitarist Paco de Lucia. Greco nurtured generations of American Spanish dancers.

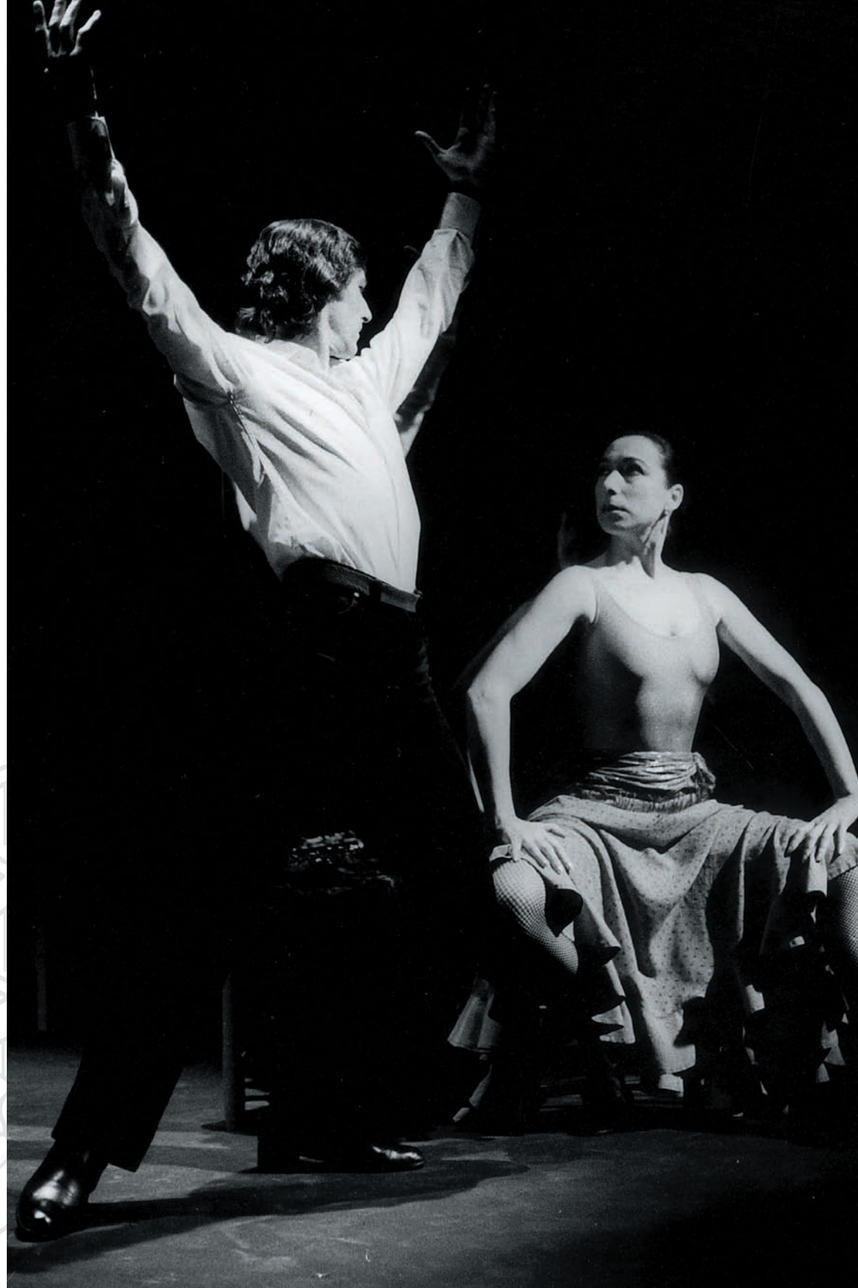
POSTWAR NEW YORK: 1945 – 1965

The grand Spanish dance companies of the 1940s, '50s and '60s were directed by men: Antonio Ruiz Soler, José Greco and Ximénez-Vargas. Some dancers stayed in New York to escape the privations and homophobia of the Francoist regime; others were drawn to the ferment of political and cultural upheaval of 1960s New York.

In 1965, Mario Maya, a Gypsy from Granada who had danced with Pilar López came to give a series of recitals with his partner and lover, classically-trained, non-Gypsy Carmen Mora. They married in New York and gave birth to a daughter, Belen Maya. Mario was deeply influenced by the Civil Rights Protests of the 1960s. He studied with Alvin Ailey and Alwin Nikolais, returning to Spain to create Flamenco's first Gypsy protest theater: *Camelamos Naquerar* [We Wish to Speak]. Its choreographic structure embodied a radical use of the Flamenco cuadro (a reincarnation of the Gypsy family) as a single body, a tightly synched group that carves space and sound. Mario had a deep and lasting influence on Flamenco artists, among them Antonio Gades, Antonio Canales, Israel Galvan, and his sister, Pastora.

1964 – 1965 NEW YORK'S WORLD'S FAIR: THE SPANISH PAVILION & ANTONIO GADES

Gades, an ardent Communist, was introduced to New York at the 1964 World's Fair. Influenced by the radical Flamenco-theater of Mario Maya, Gades built full-length works in his famous filmic partnership with Carlos Saura, broadening Flamenco's choreographic base and seamlessly weaving regional styles with Flamenco and Spanish Classical dance. It was the completion of what Argentina and Argentinita had begun in *El Amor Brujo* in 1925 and 1932.



"Show me a dance and I'll show you what kind of King or government you have." *Matteo, 1979*

SEEKING THE AUTHENTIC: MOVING BETWEEN SPAIN AND NEW YORK, 1967 - 2013

The 1960s witnessed a young, politicized generation of American Flamencos, eager to encounter the bohemianism of Gypsy life. Retaining the image of Carmen Amaya's anarchic and indomitable spirit, dancers, musicians and writers traveled to Spain to experience flamenco at its source. Some, like "Tibu" and Estela Zatania went "native," working within tightly-knit Andalusian Gypsy communities. Those who returned, like María Benitez, a part-Native American, part-Puerto Rican statuesque dancer who trained in Madrid with La Quica's daughter, shaped subsequent generations.

A young Irish-American modern dancer, Joan Fitzmaurice, was lucky to get a job dancing in the chorus of *The King and I* in 1951. In 1955, she saw Carmen Amaya's famous Carnegie Hall performance and decided to transform herself into a Flamenco dancer. She enrolled in Mariquita Flores' Spanish dance class and, there, was seen by Roberto Ximénez. Seduced by Fitzmaurice's fiery energy and sexy panache, Ximénez invited her to join his company. Christening her Maria Alba and prohibiting her from speaking English, Ximénez turned Alba into a star. Wild and untamable, she went on to one of the most illustrious careers ever of any American Flamenco artist. By 1964, having met Ramon de los Reyes, Alba formed the Alba/Reyes Spanish Dance Co. In 1977, a young American artist, Carlota Santana, auditioned and was accepted into the Maria Alba Spanish Dance Company.

SPANISH DANCING ACADEMIES IN NEW YORK CITY

In the late 18th century, touring Spanish dancers augmented their earnings by teaching wealthy New Yorkers. Carmencita gave private lessons in Gramercy Park salons. By the 20th century, dancers like Aurora Arriaza, daughter of an established Sevillian bolero maestro, opened Spanish dance schools in Manhattan. Immigrants Juan de Beaucaire Montalvo and the Cansinos (the parents of Rita Hayworth), danced on the vaudeville circuit and stayed to teach, advertising "castanet-playing and Gypsy dancing." Madame Veola, an American burlesque contortionist who picked up Spanish rhythms on a trip to Granada, later trained José Greco and Jerome Robbins.

In 1945, Kentucky-born, Texas-raised cowgirl, Russell Meriwether Hughes, known as "La Meri," founded the Ethnologic Dance Center with Ruth St. Denis at 110 E 59th St. in the marble-laden studio that had belonged to Isadora Duncan. La Meri educated generations of American Spanish dancers such as Matteo and Mariano Parra, who shared her passion for artistry and ethnography. By the 1940s, thanks to Ted Shawn's close friendship with La Argentinita, La Meri became the resident Spanish dance maestra at Jacob's Pillow.

Three men came to define Flamenco pedagogy in New York from the 1960s onward: Matteo, Mariano Parra and José Molina. Born in Utica, NY, to an impoverished Italian family, Matteo served in the U.S. Army, achieving the rank of Lieutenant. Too poor to study, Matteo once remarked, "I decided to teach. Each week I pushed back the rug and we'd have a Spanish night or an Egyptian night. I didn't know what castanets were so I used clam shells." Matteo emerged as a solo ethnic dancer at the start of the Cold War and as a company director during the 1960s. To his students at Jacob's Pillow and Juilliard, Matteo preached dance as fundamental to cross-cultural understanding. With Carola Goya, Matteo published *Woods That Dance* (1968) and a genealogy of Spanish dance steps, *The Language of Spanish Dance* (1990).

Mariano Parra, the son of an Andalusian father and a Russian mother, is the leading exponent of the Escuela Bolera in New York. After seeing an announcement in the local paper, his father, a steelworker, piled the family into the car and drove to Pittsburg to see José Greco. That night Parra decided to become a Spanish dancer. Ted Shawn granted him a scholarship to Jacob's Pillow where he met La Meri. He later graduated from her Ethnologic Dance Center, founding a company with dances choreographed by maestro Juan

9

10

Opposite page, counter-clockwise from top left: 12, 13, 14

Martínez. He traveled to Spain to study Flamenco and Spanish Classical dance with La Quica (both Martínez and Quica had danced for La Argentina) and Luisa Pericet. In 1964, Parra rented a studio at 215 W 20th St. beside modern dancer Jeff Duncan. Broke, Parra and Duncan held informal concerts entitled Mondays at 9, featuring dances by Jack Moore, Kathy Posin, David White and Deborah Jowitt. In 1965, Moore and White founded Dance Theater Workshop.

Andalusian-born José Molina migrated to Madrid as a young boy after his father was released from Franco's prison. Later, he spent the exorbitant sum of 9 pesetas to see Pilar López, starring José Greco, Manolo Vargas and Roberto Ximénez. To his father's chagrin, Molina defected from boxing school and began to dance. In 1957, Molina was flown by the comedian Steve Allen to New York to audition for his TV show. Greco saw him and hired him on the spot. Molina danced with Greco for five years and left to found José Molina Bailes Españoles. He introduced New York to wonderful dancers like Luis Montero, Antonia Martinez and Nelida Tirado. Now 77, Molina still teaches. He became a U.S. citizen in 2012.

FLAMENCO VIVO CARLOTA SANTANA, 1983 – 2013

This unprecedented exhibition was imagined in 2009 by Artistic Director, Carlota Santana, a matriarch who, like Greco, has nurtured dozens of Spanish and American dancers over the past 30 years. *100 Years of Flamenco in New York* pays tribute to the legacy of Spanish and American dance artists and to the role of the City in shaping Flamenco into modern art.

THE FARRUCA DYNASTY AT THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY: 2012

In 1986, *Flamenco Puro* premiered on Broadway. Featuring Flamenco's greatest artists, it demonstrated that Gypsy dancers do not have to be young or slim to be legends. It also highlighted dynastic relationships that underlie Flamenco innovation. El Farruco performed with his two daughters, "La Farruca," and "La Faraona," along with Farruca's husband "El Moreno" and her uncle, "El Chocolate." Farruca gave birth to a generation of legendary dancers. She has three sons who are world-renowned artists. Her father died in 1997, her husband in 2002, her uncle "Chocolate" in 2005. In 2012, Farruca came to New York with her youngest son Manuel "El Carpeta." They heard that The Performing Arts Library housed rare footage of *Flamenco Puro*. Neither had ever set foot in a library—Manuel wasn't sure what a library was. They sat in the listening booth, waiting. Manuel fiddled with his iphone. As the images appeared onscreen, Manuel's mouth fell open, Farruca gasped. They cried ¡Óle! and left in tearful silence.

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PHOTO CREDITS

COVER Maria Alba and Ramon de los Reyes. c. 1964. Photographer: Richard Noble. Collection: The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Jerome Robbins Dance Division

1 Antonia Mercé, 'La Argentina," in a posed studio shot in costume for *Danse Ibérienne*, music by Joaquin Nin, premiered at the Paris Opéra. Photograph, Madame d'Ora, 1930.

2 Niblo's Garden, corner of Prince Street and Broadway c. 1890. Photographer: Tiemann Co., New York. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Billy Rose Theatre Division

3 Fanny Elssler in *La Cachucha*. 1840. Lithography House: Currier & Ives, New York City. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Jerome Robbins Dance Division

4 Carmencita in *Antiope*. 1889. Photographer: Napoleon Sarony, New York. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Jerome Robbins Dance Division

5 Carmen Amaya. c. 1941. Photographer: Unknown. Collection: Lincoln Kirstein Spanish Dance Artists, Museum of Modern Art, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts Jerome Robbins Dance Division

6 Vicente Escudero. May 1928. Photographer: Man Ray. Courtesy of the May Ray Foundation.

7 Antonio Gades and Cristina Hoyos in the *Habanera* from Carlos Saura's film *Carmen*, 1985. Courtesy of the Fundación Antonio Gades

8 José Greco. c. 1950. Photographer: Peter Basch. The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Jerome Robbins Dance Division

9 Mariano Parra. c. 1956. Photographer: Marcus Blechmann. Collection: Mariano Parra

10 Russell Meriwether Hughes, "La Meri" c. 1945. Photographer: Marcus Blechmann. Collection: Dance Division, Museum of Modern Art, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Jerome Robbins Dance Division

11 La Farruca teaching students in Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana's New York City studios on West 43rd street. 2012. Photographer: Angelica Escoto

12 Roberto Ximénez from the Ballet Español Ximénez-Vargas, c. 1955. Photographer: Radford Bascome

13 Belen Maya. 2005. Photographer: Zarmik Moqtaderi. Collection: Zarmik Moqtaderi

14 Carlota Santana. 1983. Photographer: Victor Deliso. Collection: Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana

15 Aurora Arriaza and company member, c. 1900. Aurora Arriaza Scrapbook. Photographer unknown. Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

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