

SARA BARAS

SABORES



PRESS DOSSIER

Sabores

“Sabores” (“Flavors”) is a piece without a story which invites us to taste the different *palos*, or styles, of flamenco music and to color each of our emotions.

Musical pieces are interspersed with dance, while the show grows in crescendo not only in the variety of styles, but also in the artists’ assumed risk.

During one hour and 20 minutes, “Sabores” covers various flamenco emotions, and tries to give each piece its own character. The combination of Tangos, Seguiriyas, Zambras, Alegrías, Martinetes, Deblas, Tarantos, Tanguillos, Romances, Jaleos, Rondeñas and Bulerías creates a palette full of flavors.

“Sabores” brings alive the flamenco tradition from the actual feelings which sands down the rhythmic and melodic frontiers of flamenco’s *palos*, and melt them into a single colorful dance.

The two invited artists, José Serrano and Luis Ortega, are both dancers with strong stage personality. The corps de ballet consists of eight dancers for the different sequence. The original music, composed and conducted by José María Bandera, consists of two guitars, three voices (one female and two male), a violin, a flute and a range of percussions, is performed live by eight musicians.

It is a show with a minimal stage decoration, allowing the colors to take the limelight. The wardrobe represents a contemporary flamenco. It emphasizes the formal simplicity of female dancers’ dresses, while the colors vary according to the meaning of each of the “palos” of the music.

SARA BARAS

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Sara Baras, who was born in Cadiz, began studying dance at her mother's school when she was eight, shortly thereafter making her stage debut with a children's group at local Andalusian flamenco festivals, where she drew the attention of prominent artists in the field. By her early teens, Manuel Morao had invited her to join his company, which traveled to Paris, New York and Japan, and performed at the Andalusian Pavilion in Seville's Universal Expo in TK. At 18, she won first prize in Spain's TV show "Gente Joven" (Young People).

In TK, Baras moved to Madrid to study with the great flamenco masters, Ciro, Manolete, El Güito, Merche Esmeralda, Antonio Canales, and the ballet teacher, Dania González. She also danced with Javier Barón and El Güito, and performed as a guest with Canales' company in "Gitano," "Torero," "A cuerda y tacón," "Raíz" and "Romancero Gitano." (Translate titles). During this period, the filmmaker Mike Figgis, who directed "Leaving Las Vegas," asked her to star in his film "Flamenco Women."

With her highly acclaimed show, "Sensaciones" (translate), she established her own company in 1998, in the same year, presenting "Cádiz-La Isla" (translate), homage to Cadiz, at the Biennial in Seville. Branching out, she also became the MC of a popular TV flamenco show, "Algo mas que," and began appearing in fashion advertisements for among others, the department store chain El Corte Ingles and the Tourist Board of Andalusia.

Baras' success began to grow: she choreographed "Sueños" (translate) in 1999, and then "Juana la loca (vivir por amor)" (translate), the story of Juana of Castile, which she presented at the Biennial of Spain in 2000. Directed by Luis Olmos, and costarring José Serrano, the show became a great success in Spain, France, Latin America and Japan, winning the prestigious Max Award (is this the complete name of this award?) for interpretation, choreography and best dance show.

Interested in creating dramas as well as abstract dances, Baras next choreographed the story of liberal martyr, Mariana Pineda, in 2002, commissioning the distinguished composer Manolo Sanlúcar to write the score, and engaging Lluís Pasqual, as director. The show, "Mariana Pineda," stayed a record-breaking five months in Madrid and two months in Barcelona, then toured to Paris, Milan, Bogota, Guanajuato, Caracas, Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Singapore and Hong Kong.

"Mariana Pineda" won Spain's National Dance Award and Andalusia's Golden Medal and was recorded live for DVD by Sony Music. Excerpts from "Suenos" have also been recorded for DVD by TK. They accompany a book of photographs by Peter Müller, documenting her 2005 tour. Marking her return to film in 2005, she interpreted two dances, "Albaicín" and "Asturias" for director Carlos Saura's "Iberia," partnered by José Serrano in the latter.

In a return to abstract dance, Baras offers the premiere of "Sabores" (translate) in Paris this spring. It features the many styles and moods of flamenco, performed by Baras, her guests, Jose Serrano and Jose Louis Ortega, and a corps of eight dancers. It will be accompanied by a score composed and conducted by José María Bandera and played live by eight musicians, including three singers.

PRESS CRITICS

It is a fact that, despite her youth, Sara Baras is part of the saga of great flamenco dancers.

El Mundo 10/06/1998

Watching her one has the sensation of witnessing something unique; of being before an artist who possesses all the qualities of the very few bailaoras who share the Olympus of flamenco in the present day, but with yet another invaluable treasure in her favour: her youth...Elegant, agile, harmonious, with both fire and control in her feet, the dancer offered a masterful example of flamenco dance.

El Periódico de Catalunya 10/04/1998

Sara Baras, or the stylised beauty of dance...imbued with spicy grace by the salt mines of her native land, her arms and hands turn the dance that she interprets into velvet...

Diario de Jerez

Sara Baras is the most sensational discovery in female dance since Cristina Hoyos and Manuela Vargas. Her flamenco is different, with marble-carved back, arms and hands. Her dance is sculptural, magnificent; her footwork is of a virtuosity that is rarely reached by female dancers.

Le Figaro

Sara, the queen of Seville...the dancer has taken a decisive step in her career...And she has done so with a magnificent show, a splendid creation of such intensity that it will consecrate her as a performer and choreographer.

Sara Baras can already be sensed to be one of the great dames of Spanish dance.

The reign of Baras has only just begun.

ABC 09/14/2000

Ms Baras is one of Spain's most popular young dancers and well known for her appearances on television. With her hair colored a dazzling gold, she has the presence and technique to hold the stage along.

The New York Times

Fiery and precise, she came as close as any dancer to looking like Amaya.

Boston Sunday Globe 01/25/2005

Few flamenco dancers have become such a star

Los Angeles Times

At age 34, flamenco star Sara Baras doesn't dance with the weight of the art's resident sibyls or earth mothers. Nor does she embody private passions and the pride of the gypsy underclass.

No, at UCLA's Royce Hall on Wednesday, Baras danced for pleasure, connecting with her audience through eye contact and gestures— even blowing kisses at one point.

Los Angeles Times 02/11/2005

Sara Baras has attitude. Her frame, though diminutive, seems to fill the entire stage. The sultry bailaora possesses the ability to gaze into the audience with a knowing glance, eyes burning, before extending her arm to blow a kiss.

The Independent 02/15/2005

SPANISH PRESS REVIEWS



Sara Baras ha vuelto a cosechar un extraordinario éxito en el Théâtre des Champs-Élysées de París, un escenario en el que ha pasado las Navidades de los últimos años, y con cuyo público tiene una complicidad especial: «Sabores» es el título de su nuevo espectáculo

...Y Sara Baras hizo la luz en París

TEXTO: JULIO BRAVO ENVIADO ESPECIAL FOTO: EFE

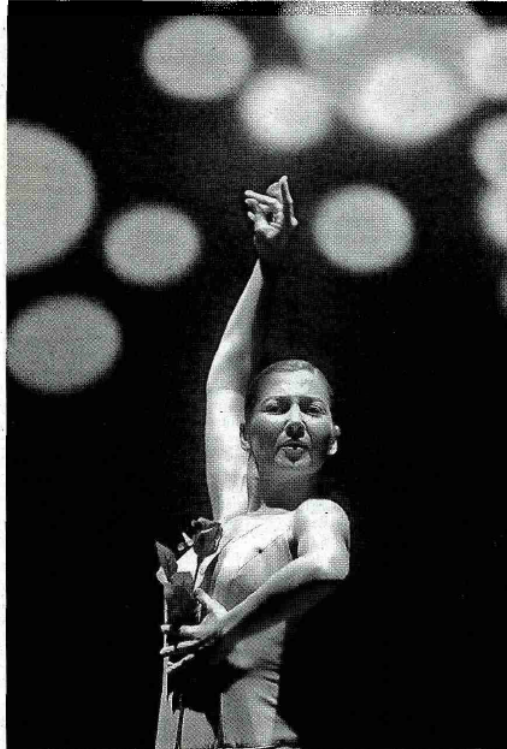
PARÍS. A Sara Baras, los nervios previos a una representación se le pasan a base de taconazos. Pero anteayer no lo conseguía ni aunque rompiera el suelo de su camerino a golpes. Antes del estreno apuraba los minutos, con los ojos de los técnicos fijos en el reloj, y daba las últimas indicaciones sobre el escenario a bailarines y músicos. «No es normal que esté tan nerviosa...», se quejaba.

Pero si eran normales estos nervios, porque Sara se enfrentaba al estreno absoluto del espectáculo probablemente más personal de su carrera, que llega después de «Mariana Pineda» —el trabajo con el que dio el definitivo salto de calidad que necesitaba como artista y como directora de compañía—. Jugaba prácticamente en casa, porque el Théâtre des Champs-Élysées —un elegante coliseo situado casi al pie de la Torre Eiffel— lleva varios años acogiendo por Navidad el baile de la gaditana gracias al empeño de su director, Francis Lepigeon, un decidido amante del flamenco.

Esa complicidad entre la bailarina y el público parisino —con alguna que otra incrustación gaditana, que animó y contagió con sus constantes piropos al respetable— se notó desde el arranque del espectáculo —excesivamente moroso—, fue creciendo y convirtiéndose en aplausos conforme transcurren las coreografías y se desbordó en una entusiasta ovación al concluir «Sabores». Para entonces, Sara Baras ya no estaba nerviosa, y respondió al cariño de los mil seiscientos espectadores con una vertiginosa e irrepetible «carricitilla» de las suyas, capaz de dejar sin aliento a más de uno, y que confirma que Sara Baras es, además de una magnífica artista, un misterio de la naturaleza, porque parece mentira que un ser humano tan menudo como es ella tenga tanta energía después de casi dos exigentes horas de baile.

Al concluir la representación los nervios de la bailarina se transformaron en excitación. Con la sonrisa ya relajada recibía en el propio escenario las primeras felicitaciones. Una periodista le preguntaba que cómo se sentía y Sara abría los ojos y los brazos para dejar escapar por ellos toda la felicidad que tenía dentro.

Y es que «Sabores» es, para Sara Baras, mucho más que un nuevo espectáculo. Es una apuesta personal, un reto que se ha puesto a sí misma. Como bailarina, la gaditana ha convencido ya prácticamente a todos (no hay unanimidad, lógicamente, porque como ella misma dice, el libro de gustos está en blanco). Ahora ella misma quería demostrar que es capaz de crear por sí misma un espectáculo digno, elegante —una palabra que aflora constantemente a su boca— y de calidad. «Sabores»



Sara Baras, durante la «Bulería de Concha» en su estreno parisino

está lleno de nudos porque Sara Baras no ha querido que se escape ningún cabo. Ha querido que cada luz, que cada color del vestuario, que cada elemento escénico tenga su razón de ser.

Claro que lo que no necesita explicación es el baile de Sara Baras, cada vez más redondo, más gustoso. Su taconeado sigue siendo embriagador por lo galopante y exacto, pero a ello une ahora cada vez más el gusto por los silencios, por las pinceladas de los dedos, por los versos dichos con los hombros o con las caderas... Su número final, la «Bulería de Concha» —dedicada a su madre—, está bailada con esa intimidad, con esa contención... Se hace la luz cuando ella entra en escena, y la temperatura artística sube varios grados.

Y eso que Sara ha cuidado también la guarnición más que nunca. El cuerpo de baile ha crecido en número y en calidad con respecto a trabajos anteriores. Y los dos balladores invitados muestran sus distintas personalidades: Luis Ortega en una distinguida seguiriya, bailada con palillos —lo que es muy de agradecer en estos tiempos— y José Serrano en unas bravías alegrías.

Sara Baras dio a luz sus «Sabores» en la Ciudad de la luz y ahora queda que la criatura crezca. Anteayer, la bailarina gaditana ya había tomado el cincel para empezar a limar aristas. Ya lo dijo Luis Pasqual cuando montó junto a ella «Mariana Pineda»: «Lo único que me cansa de este montaje es que Sara no se cansa nunca».

«Su taconeado sigue siendo embriagador por lo galopante y exacto, pero a ello une ahora cada vez más el gusto por los silencios»



Crítica* dansa

Bàrbara Raubert
Nonell

Gust de Mon Chéri



Sara Baras destaca sense esforç ■ NACHO GALLEGU / EFE

Com els bombons d'embolcall brillant que ofereixen a l'entrada del teatre, l'espectacle de Sara Baras és acaramelat i elegant, i no hi ha cap dubte que tothom en voldrà més, però a la sortida només en queden les caps buides amuntegades darrere la porta, perquè en l'exactitud del muntatge i del seus components hi trobem a faltar algun gust més fort, com de xocolata amarga.

La bailaora ha firmat la coreografia, la il·luminació i el vestuari en un intent de fer un espectacle rodó en què no quedi cap element penjat i que reculli la seva ja llarga trajectòria, per dedicar-lo a la seva mare i mestra. Per això Sabores comença amb un bolero amb música enregistrada, en el qual van passant imatges evocadores: vestits als penjadors, músics afinant instruments, ballarins arreglant-se, fent exercicis de ballet... És un pròleg de la vida d'aquesta artista, que ha volgut demostrar que tot el seu bagatge i l'encara més gran geni es pot domesticar en un espectacle de flamenc contemporani.

Així és com construeix cada quadre d'equilibri compositiu perfecte, cada silenci i cada fos a negre que fa aparèixer o desapa-

rèixer nous ballarins. Amb un cos de nou joves ballarins que l'emmarquen, ella destaca sense esforç, i per no estar del tot sola en el seu petit altar, l'acompanyen els genials José Serrano (que amb la seva alegria de mans mandroses arrossega passió i simpatia) i Luis Ortega (que fa una deliciosa *seguriya* amb castanyoles).

Ella està fantàstica, ja sigui amb aquell vestit que cau fins als peus i que mou com les ales d'una papallona -sembla la Loie Fuller del flamenc-, o amb els pantalons de picador que, a ritme

Baras segueix inquietant amb força en el seu 'zapateado'

de *martinete*, aguanten uns *cambrés* ràpids que li dobleguen el cos en dues parts per tornar a la verticalitat i mirar el públic de cara. Però allà on segueix inquietant amb més força és en el *zapateado*, quan amb la punta va martellejant un cercle al seu voltant, i, sobretot, en la *corrida* del final de festa, per deixar-nos sense alè.

* Sabores, AMB SARA BARAS. BTM. 25 DE GENER.



Sara Baras triunfa por todo lo alto en París con 'Sabores', su nuevo espectáculo

«El público es muy respetuoso pero exigente, y cuando algo le gusta se vuelve gritón», dice la bailaora gitana, que actúa en el Teatro de los Campos Elíseos hasta el 8 de enero

ALFREDO GRIMALDOS
PARIS - París se rindió de nuevo ante el arte y la magia de Sara Baras. En esta ocasión fue con motivo del estreno del nuevo espectáculo de la bailaora gaditana, *Sabores*, que tiende un puente entre el clasicismo y la modernidad. Lo presentó anteanoche y se mantendrá en cartel hasta el próximo 8 de enero.

En la ciudad del Sena se da por descontado que, cada año, la Navidad debe tener, inevitablemente, un toque flamenco de calidad, gracias a Sara. Para el personal del Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, situado en una zona parisina de mucho copete, frente a la torre Eiffel, la bailaora y los integrantes de su compañía ya son como de la familia. Bailaoras, guitarristas, tocores, palmeros y toda la *troupe* que les acompaña están acostumbrados a comerse el turrón con acompañamiento de champagne francés.

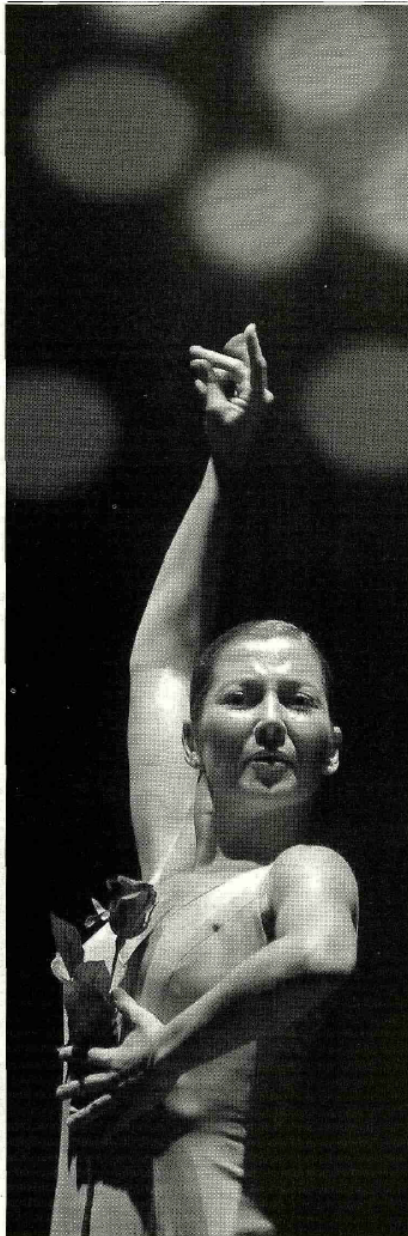
Anteriormente, en el mismo escenario y en estas fechas, han presentado *Juana la Loca*, *Mariana Pineda* y *Sueños*.

«Yo creo que en París he trabajado más que en ningún otro sitio del mundo», afirma Sara. «De jovencita, estuve aquí dos temporadas completas con la compañía jerezana de Manuel Morao, también he venido con el espectáculo *Gitano*, de Antonio Canales, y nunca se me olvidarán las noches que actué con *El Güito* en el Teatro Chatelet».

En Francia, el arte jondo se valora. Sólo hay que recordar que la gloriosa antología de tres discos dirigida por Perico del Lunar a mediados de los años 50, que supuso un hito en la revalorización del flamenco, adquirió valor de referencia sólo después de que nuestros vecinos la galardonaran.

«En París, el público es muy respetuoso, pero exigente», añade Sara. «Y cuando algo les gusta de verdad se vuelve gritón y se vuelca con los artistas». Eso es lo que ocurrió el lunes por la noche: los espectadores que abarrotaron el Théâtre des Champs-Élysées jalearon efusivamente, puestos de pie, a la compañía. El demoledor fin de fiesta no fue para menos. Ni el resto del espectáculo, que fue avanzando en *crescendo* para rematar por todo lo alto.

Los artistas se lo merecían. Han trabajado en este nuevo montaje durante mucho tiempo, sacando horas de ensayo de donde no las había. Y el resultado es un bloque bastante sólido y de calidad, aunque aún hay que pulir muchos detalles antes de cruzar los Pirineos hacia el sur. La mayor parte de las piezas que integran *Sabores* se han ido perfilando paralelamente a la gira de *Sueños*, el espectáculo con el que la compañía ha trabajado este año. Y después, durante un mes entero, Sara y los suyos se han encerrado, haciendo jornadas maratónicas, para acabar de ensambiarlo todo. La gaditana es inagota-



Sara Baras, durante su actuación de anteanoche en París. / NACHO GALLEGOS / EFE

ble, una fuerza de la naturaleza.

Durante casi hora y media de un espectáculo variado y bien hilado, con una docena de números distintos, Sara Baras no escatima su presencia sobre el escenario. Y como ocurre en todos sus montajes, la temperatura sube cuando ella aparece. Sólo hay que recordar el apabullante baile por martinete que hace, un recital de fuerza, jondura y taconeo. O el taranto que recrea con insólita belleza, jugando con los vuelos de su vestido y haciendo alarde de sus portentosos pies. Al final, lo remata con picardía, por tanguillos, para dar entrada a toda la compañía. Sara ha convertido ya en clásico su singular vestuario, que le permite crear imágenes de fascinante belleza pictórica.

Hay que hacer mención especial a la difícil seguiría de sabor añejo que baila Luis Ortega con castañuelas. Y a las alegrías que se marca José Serrano tocado con sombrero cordobés, en una estampa de sabor antiguo. El cante se inicia con el aire de la alegrías de Córdo-

En la capital francesa se da por descontado cada Navidad el toque flamenco de la artista

ba, la tierra de Serrano, y continúa con sabor salinero gaditano. Otro de los platos fuertes es una creación musical de José Carlos Gómez, *A fuego lento*, que Sara baila con José Serrano y Luis Ortega.

El espectáculo arranca desde las raíces flamencas más puras -Sara hace guiños a los grandes maestros- y después entrevera algunos números con base musical más lánguida. Eso hay que equilibrarlo mejor. Por ejemplo, al bolero del principio le falta fuerza y es demasiado largo para comenzar el espectáculo con él. Está claro que, cuando la cosa vuelve al compás flamenco más vibrante, el espectáculo gana intensidad y los aplausos lo corroboran. Sólo hay que ver dónde se caldea o queda frío el ambiente para ir puliendo el montaje.

Cuando Sara se pone *flamencóna* y ejerce su poderío, el público muere con ella. Por ejemplo, en las apoteósicas bulerías del final, dedicadas a su madre, Concha Baras, que estaba allí. Una locura. Y en el fin de fiesta, la bailaora se apropió hasta del espacio reservado para la orquesta -el escenario está preparado para la representación de óperas-, buscando mayor cercanía con el público. Los franceses, que no pudieron entrar en Cádiz en 1812 bajo el mando de Napoleón, se dieron el lunes un baño de auténtico flamenco con sabor a bahía gaditana. Después, intentaban subir hacia el Arco de Triunfo, por los Campos Elíseos, a compás de bulerías.



DANZA / Sabores

De los pies a la cabeza

Sara Baras

Dirección, coreografía y baile: Sara Baras. Colaboración especial: José Serrano y Luis Ortega./ Cuerpo de baile: Alicia Fernández, Cecilia Gómez, Ana González, Charo Pedraja, María Vega, Raúl Fernández, José Galán, Raúl Prieto, Daniel Saltares./ Director musical: José María Bandera./ Escenario: Barcelona Teatre Musical./ Fecha: 26 enero 2006
Calificación: ★★★★★

ROSLI AYUSO

BARCELONA.- La madurez artística de Sara Baras es un hecho rotundo e innegable tras contemplar su espectáculo del miércoles por la noche en el Barcelona Teatre Musical. Hacer flamenco en un antiguo palacio de deportes e incluso rozar el *duende*, únicamente le está dado conseguirlo a los artistas de su talla y con el bagaje acumulado en estos últimos años. El público, obviando

esas condiciones climáticas y espaciales adversas, salió más convencido que nunca. Aplaudieron, admiraron y disfrutaron de una bailaora que pasará a los anales de la historia.

Sabores, como planteamiento de espectáculo, no es nada del otro mundo: recrear algunos palos y vestirlos un poco: nada más; pero tampoco nada menos. Así que la historia empezó como sigue: un preludio musical y luego un bello cuadro escénico: toda la compañía arreglándose el traje, probándose un zapato, afinando las guitarras. En fin, todo lo que sucede entre bambalinas antes de salir al escenario y de que empiece la función. Como si quisieran decirnos: señoras y señores, no vamos a hacer nada más lo que sabemos hacer, pero lo vamos a hacer muy requetebien. Y así fué.

Excelentes, impecables, los bai-

laores y bailaoras; el toque y el cante bien dispuesto y mejor sonorizado; las intervenciones estelares de José Serrano y Luis Ortega, junto a la Baras, un regalo para los sentidos, el uno por su original sorpresa con su baile de castañuelas, el otro con su fuerza y el *duende* de su singulares movimientos... Su baile no es de los que se quedan parados: recorre el espacio, se desplaza en diagonal tras un quiebro, pone a los bailaores en el suelo, de cuclillas, y pasa revista a toda su compañía en una carretilla de zapateo espectacular.

Sara Baras-ofreció una faceta coreográfica de gran formato muy pensada y elaborada: todos los detalles, en su justa medida, en su justa proporción, con elegancia, sensibilidad, sin eclipsar a nadie, pero también con el reto de conectar hasta con el público de las últimas gradas. Y lo consiguió.



FLAMENCO

Levantando pasiones

Sabores

Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras. Coreografía y vestuario: Sara Baras. Bailarinas invitadas: José Serrano y Luis Ortega. Música: José María Bandera, José Carlos Gómez, Mario Montoya, Miguel de la Tola y Saúl Quirós. Dirección musical: José M. Bandera. Iluminación y escenografía: Fernando Martín y Sara Baras. VII Festival Mil·lenni. Barcelona Teatre Musical (BTM), Barcelona, 25 de enero.

CARMEN DEL VAL

El camaleónico zapateado y el intenso baile de Sara Baras calentaron el frío recinto del Barcelona Teatre Musical (BTM), donde la magnífica bailarina gaditana, al frente de su compañía, presentó su último espectáculo, titulado *Sabores*, estrenado recientemente en París. Embriagador e hipnótico, este montaje es un auténtico regalo para los sentidos. El numeroso público que llenó el BTM se derritió ante el arte de la bailaora, que en esta obra se descubre como una inteligente creadora que sabe lo que quiere el espectador y se lo brinda.

Diseñado, estudiado y controlado hasta en el más mínimo detalle, *Sabores* es la tercera parte de una trilogía que se inició con *Sueños* y *Sensaciones*. En este espectáculo la Baras rinde homenaje a los maestros que la han ayudado en su carrera profesional, empezando por su madre, Concha. Sin embargo, la obra no tiene un hilo argumental, sino que se muestra como un apasionante recorrido por los diferentes palos del flamenco. Su desarrollo tiene un ritmo dinámico y siempre en línea ascendente.

Elegancia

Con un cuerpo de baile disciplinado formado por cinco bailarinas y cuatro bailarines, más la música en directo que interpreta el grupo dirigido por José María Bandera y la colaboración de dos brillantes bailarines, José Serrano y Luis Ortega, Sara Baras ha creado un bello e inteligente espectáculo que potencia al máximo las cualidades interpretativas de todos ellos. Desde el principio se observa el cohesionado trabajo coral de los ocho bailarines. Su flamenco elegante está salpicado de movimientos de danza contemporánea, lo que impregna su baile de una atrayente actualidad. La coreografía *A fuego lento* —la única que no firma la bailaora, aunque sí la interpreta junto con José Serrano y Luis Ortega, autores de la coreografía— es solemne y de una garra excepcional. Serrano tiene un zapateado electrizante y enérgico, al igual que su baile, mientras que el de Ortega resulta más versátil. Cada una de las intervenciones de Sara Baras cortaron la respiración del espectador por su maestría y entrega. Su cuerpo se quebraba como el de un reptil, secechaba como el de un felino o embestia como un toro según la intensidad del palo. Así, se mostraba pasional en los jaleos, pícaro en las bulerías, sensual en los tanguillos y acongojado en las seguidillas. En el martinete su interpretación rozó la genialidad. Se encarnó en diosa y el público la adoró.

Mención especial merece el vestuario de *Sabores*, creado por la propia artista. Elegante y actual, se convierte en el mejor aliado de su baile. Este inolvidable espectáculo regresará a Barcelona, concretamente al teatro Tivoli, en mayo.



Crónica

París se entrega a Sara Baras

La coreógrafa y bailaora triunfa en el estreno mundial de 'Sabores', su nuevo espectáculo

JUAN SOTO VIÑOLO
PARÍS. ENVIADO ESPECIAL

➔ Sara Baras estrenó el lunes en el teatro de los Campos Elíseos de París su último espectáculo, *Sabores*, una depurada recreación del neoflamingo al que toda la compañía presta un riguroso virtuosismo, fruto de la profesionalidad del ballet y de la categoría de los artistas invitados, José Serrano y Luis Ortega, todos bajo la dirección de la bailaora y coreógrafa.

Desde hace varios años Sara Baras tiene cita en el mismo teatro, que la recibe con cariño y entusiasmo. Aunque lejos de Cádiz, sabe que las navidades en París, rodeada de su familia y un buen público, es un regalo impagable que premia una carrera marcada por la profesionalidad y el respeto al espectador.

Desde su inauguración en 1913 el teatro de los Campos Elíseos presta al flamenco especial atención. De Carmen Amaya a Sara Baras, por este escenario han desfilado las grandes figuras del flamenco y la danza. Desde el arretrato de Amaya hasta la sutileza de Sara Baras, París ha sido testigo de la evolución de este arte instintivo al que la gaditana le da el toque, la finura y la elegancia que cautiva en Francia.

A diferencia de *Sueños*, su anterior

espectáculo, Sara aporta en *Sabores* madurez creativa. Ha ensayado durante dos meses el espectáculo hasta lograr una coreografía sin fisuras que en cuanto se tueda un poco será irreprochable. Una delicia verles bailar por tanguillos, zambra y soleá. El Festival del Milenio ha programado *Sabores* en el Barcelona Teatre Musical del 25 al 29 de enero.

Pero hay más, porque no basta con la presencia de Sara en el escenario, sino que la escenografía en esta ocasión ha intervenido en el imaginativo diseño de luces y en el sobrio vestuario del ballet.

O DEDICADO A SU MADRE

Sara dedica *Sabores* a Concha, su madre y maestra, a través de un abanico de palos, música, cantos y la grandeza del baile, encarnado en la figura de la bailaora, que es obvio decirlo, es una figurín, una supermodelo del flamenco. De hecho, antes del fin de fiesta, hay un regalo, *Bulería de Concha*. La música original es de José María Bandera, con la colaboración especial de José Carlos Gómez.

Adaptando el flamenco a las nuevas corrientes musicales, en la que cabe la guitarra eterna, la percusión, el aderezo de las castañuelas en la siquiuya de Luis Ortega y el ritmo trepidante de las alegrías de José Serrano, así como el paso a tres de Sara titulado *A fuego lento*, la coreógrafa ofreció un espectáculo de calidad y de evidente fuerza desde el inicio.

Se puso al frente de una compañía que no cuenta con otra subvención que la respuesta del público y el talento, la profesionalidad y el arte de Sara Baras, que vive su tiem-



➔ Sara Baras, entre José Serrano (izquierda) y Luis Ortega, en París.

La frase

«AL PÚBLICO LE HA GUSTADO, PERO NOSOTROS TAMBIÉN NOS HEMOS GUSTADO»

po divulgando el flamenco del siglo XXI, el cual, a diferencia del de Jerez, sale del cuarto y se presenta en los escenarios. No olvidemos que, sin Jerez, no sería posible este flamenco bello y exportable.

Sara, como siempre, se luce, pero en esta ocasión hace lucir a toda su gente, algo que le agradeció el público puesto en pie bajo la espectacular

cúpula que corona este teatro de rancio abolengo teatral. «Ha sido muy bonito», valoraba Baras al final. «Que le guste a la gente de fuera es importantísimo, pero nosotros también nos hemos gustado».

Los nervios no faltaron. «Estábamos entre bastidores un poco atascados, pero disfrutando del que bailaba. Como lo hemos grabado, después corregiremos fallitos, porque es verdad que yo soy muy pesada para eso, pero de primeras yo me siento orgullosa de todo el equipo, porque era un escalón bastante grande el que subíamos como espectáculo». O



DANZA FLAMENCA

Una catarata de pasión y elegancia

Sabores

Barcelona Teatre Musical
25 DE ENERO

COREOGRAFÍA Y DIRECCIÓN: Sara Baras
MÚSICA: José María Bandera
BALAOERES: Sara Baras, José Serrano, Luis Ortega

MONTSE G. OZTET
motzet@elperiodico.com

Con Sabores, Sara Baras cierra una trilogía de espectáculos de puro baile flamenco y suma un nuevo acierto a su carrera gracias a un montaje que irradia pasión, elegancia y rigor. Cualidades que se aprecian desde el preámbulo del programa, un *Bolero* que deja ver cómo los artistas se preparan para iniciar el espectáculo, hasta la retirada final del grupo de músicos y bailaores, un *fin de fiesta* con el público en pie aplaudiendo al cuadro de intérpretes.

Alcanzada la madurez y con un temple y poderío admirables, Baras demuestra que es una artista de gran talento. Y lo hace no sólo a través de su extraordinario baile, sino también desde su condición de directora, confirmando un implacable control escénico donde todo parece estar pesado y medido, sin enfriar ni ahogar el sentimiento espontáneo y apasionado de los artistas.

MOVIMIENTOS PRODIGIOSOS

El baile de Baras plasma en el espacio unos movimientos y ritmos prodigiosos. A una de sus cualidades más reconocidas, su taconeo implacable y electrizante, se le añade un cimbreo de torso, un juego de brazos y un aleteo de manos delicado y majestuoso. Imágenes de gran belleza en las que convergen una técnica enladrada, un sentimiento generoso y una elegancia tanto física como en la manera de arremeter la falda.

Si genial estuvo en las interpretaciones de *Taranta*, *Zambra* y *Bulería de Concha* —esta última dedicada a su madre—, donde la artista aportó a cada uno de los palos los arrebatos y los templos



ENORME ESPECTÁCULO SARA BARAS, CON JOSÉ SERRANO Y LUIS ORTEGA, EN 'SABORES'.

precisos, sublimó se la vio en *Martinete*, donde, vistiendo unos pantalones de montar, arremetió con gran capacidad física y emocional el compás, rubricando su condición de grande del flamenco.

El talento de Baras también está a la hora de saber rodearse de un gran cuadro de músicos, dirigidos por José María Bandera, y de bailaores excelentes, así como de José Serrano y Luis Ortega, dos artistas de alto nivel que compartieron con Baras *A fuego lento*, una coreografía de la cual los intérpretes masculinos comparten autoría con Lola Greco.

Tanto Serrano como Ortega tuvieron su lucimiento individual. El primero, con la ejecución de *Alegria*, donde se entregó a los ritmos festivos y vivaces con un control absoluto, a la vez que su imagen lucía un atuendo (sombrero de ala ancha incluido) que recordaba a los viejos maestros del flamenco. Por su lado, Ortega, en *Seguiriya*, exteriorizó con un abanico de matices las emociones que encierra este baile. Y lo hizo no sólo desplegando una buena estampa flamenca, sino también bajo una cascada de sonidos procedente de las castañuelas que acompañaban su baile.



FLAMENCO

Sara Baras revoluciona París con «Sabores»

La bailaora gaditana elige los Campos Elíseos para el estreno mundial de su nuevo espectáculo

JUAN CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ

París Cada uno baila como es. Así es el flamenco: no admite otra cosa que sinceridad si se quiere llegar a alguna parte. Sara Baras ahora mismo está en la cumbre con las armas de su propia personalidad: su fuerza infinita, su talento incansable, su rigor escénico. En «Suite flamenca: Sabores», el espectáculo con el que cierra la trilogía iniciada con «Sensaciones» y prolongada con el exitoso «Sueños», todo eso queda en evidencia: la fuerza incombustible del baile llevada a la máxima expresión de poderío, en resumen, porque hay muchas maneras de encarar el baile, ya se sabe, pero Baras optó desde niña por hacer sobre el escenario lo que el cuerpo —y los pies, su taconeo sigue siendo inigualable— le pedía. Por ejemplo, en este espectáculo estrenado el lunes en el Théâtre des Champs-Élysées interpreta un martinete que taconea directamente sobre el corazón. Irresistible. Es que Sara Baras, que firma la práctica totalidad de las catorce coreografías que interpreta su compañía, ha que-

rido volver a los orígenes: a un recorrido que, como ella misma sostiene, «colorea los sentimientos», a través de palos que no había frecuentado mucho hasta ahora sobre el escenario: como la taranta, la zambra, el martinete, en los que el sabor que queda es el de un buen potaje: sabroso, condimentado, con sustancia. En parte, por el salto adelante que da la bailaora de la Isla, con unas coreografías muy medidas que se engarzan a la perfección y que apenas dejan respirar al espectador. Y, además, por el brío que ha cogido la compañía, que crece en número y calidad, en parte por un Luis Ortega sobrado para interpretar con castañuelas una seguidilla que convoca al duende.

Taconeo indómito. Un éxito sin paliativos, y sin dudas, un espectáculo que consolida a la formación, y sobre todo a la artista gaditana, porque sin que sea demérito para el resto de su compañía, cuando la de San Fernando toma el escenario la respiración se condensa, y es que la Baras no sólo persigue ya ese taconeo indómito que le ha hecho fama, sino que tam-



Baras, en un momento de su actuación

bién bordea las viejas maneras del baile: la bulería que cierra el espectáculo, y que dedica a su madre, Concha, es poco más que una declaración de intenciones en este sentido, variada y clásica, en la que todo el prota-

gonismo lo asume una bailaora capaz de demostrar que todavía tiene más cosas que aportar, con sus piernas, su cuerpo y su inteligencia. En París, por ejemplo, ya es toda una institución. Veinte noches más tiene por delante, un lleno casi garantizado, y no porque Jean Paul Gaultier y Anne Hidalgo, la vicealcaldesa de la Ciudad de la Luz y nacida también en San Fernando, Cádiz, sean fieles seguidores, sino porque con esta ya son cinco las Navidades que pasa en la capital francesa todo su arte. Y el éxito cada día va a más.

Estados Unidos, Japón, Gran Bretaña, gran parte de América Latina son sus destinos. Esto no ha hecho más que comenzar. Nerviosa antes del estreno y llena de satisfacción una vez acabado, Sara Baras afirmó estar impresionada por el recibimiento del público, que no es ajeno al flamenco, sino buen conocedor del mismo. Pese a todo, tras acabar el espectáculo la compañía aún se quedó perfeccionando sus números. A la Baras le obsesiona la perfección. Sin duda le sacará más a estos «Sabores» ya de por sí muy apetecibles.



Sabores de degustación

SABORES

Dirección: Sara Baras.
Coreografía: Sara Baras, con la colaboración de José Serrano y Luis Ortega

Música: José M.^o Bandera, José Carlos Gómez, Mario Montoya, Miguel de la Tolea, Saúl Quirós

Baile: Sara Baras, José Serrano, Luis Ortega, y el cuerpo de baile con A. Fernández, R. Fernández, J. Galán, C. Gómez, A. González, C. Pedraja, R. Prieto, D. Saltares, M. Vega.

Lugar y fecha: Barcelona Teatre Musical (25/1/2006)

JOAQUIM NOGUERO

El último espectáculo de Sara Baras vuelve a la que había sido la tónica habitual de sus trabajos, con la excepción de *Juana la Loca* y la representación de *Mariana Pineda*: no se trata de un espectáculo de argumento, sino un sentido y expresivo concierto flamenco, con entregas sucesivas de los distintos palos, sin otra dramaturgia que la puramente rítmica y plástica, donde Sara Baras y el par de intérpretes masculinos invitados se reservan un papel central, que está claramente subrayado.

Sabores es una cuestión de texturas, una ensalada de buen baile, de excelente música, de colores y de juegos de luces y sombras, un menú de degustación que seduce a los sentidos, que satisface ciertamente al paladar, pero que apenas llenaría y alimentaría un estómago con hambre de chicha.

Por suerte uno va a *Sabores* simplemente a disfrutar y a pasar una agradable velada con el crescendo con que sabe conducirnos de la mano has-

ta llegar a la soleá y la bulería finales la bailaora Sara Baras.

El espectáculo se cocina, tranquilamente, a fuego lento, por decirlo como el título de una de las piezas, y el espectador apenas se ve atraído por la guarnición, puesto que la distancia que se percibe entre la estrella y el cuerpo de baile es la que marcan los cánones en la mayoría de las compañías flamencas, fuera de excepciones como la de Canales (donde nunca mejor ha estado Baras) o la de María Pagés (en la estela de Gades).

Pero eso sí, el taconeo de Sara Baras sigue siendo un portento, de una fuerza muy excepcional, sorprendente como un puñal camuflado en la caricia ondulante de su cuerpo y de sus brazos.

Mezcla de energía y de dulzura, el espectáculo *Sabores* seduce seguro, enamora un buen rato, se ama sólo al momento.●



FESTIVAL DEL MIL LEVI

La bailaora Sara Baras. en *Sabores*

FLAMENCO-WORLD

SARA BARAS, 'SABORES'. ESTRENO EN PARÍS

Vuelta a los orígenes

Céline Dupin. París, 21 de diciembre de 2005

'Sabores'. Sara Baras: baile, coreografía, dirección, vestuario. José Serrano y Luis Ortega: artistas invitados. José María Bandera, José Carlos Gómez: música. Alicia Fernández, Cecilia Gómez, Ana González, Charo Pedraja, María Vega, Raúl Fernández, José Galán, Raúl Prieto, Daniel Saltares: cuerpo de baile. José María Bandera, Carlos Gómez, Mario Montoya: guitarras. Antonio Suárez: percusión. José Amador Goñi: violín. Miguel de la Tolea, Saúl Quirós: cante. Théâtre des Champs Elysées. París (Francia), del 19 de diciembre de 2005 al 8 de enero de 2006.

Pasan diez minutos de las ocho de la tarde. [Sara Baras](#) y su ballet flamenco van con una pizca de retraso. Pero ya se apagan las luces, el público impaciente está a la sombra, como los techos pintados a principios del siglo XX por el pintor francés Maurice Denis. Es el tercer pase del nuevo espectáculo de Sara Baras en París y la sala esta casi llena. Al contrario, las dos primeras noches, no había ni una butaca libre. Pero basta. La sala esta en la oscuridad y, de repente, una estrella entra en escena. El público tiene el aliento entrecortado. Ya sabe que está a punto de asistir a un evento unico: el nacimiento de un espectáculo, el placer de saborear antes de la mayoría de los aficionados y, en particular, de los españoles, al mejor ballet flamenco.

El traje de Sara Baras es gris, sobrio. Se ha atado los extremos alrededor de sus caderas, para que no le molesten en sus movimientos. Baila como de costumbre, sin sorpresas, con tanta gracia... Está cercada por los dos bailaroes con quienes comparte escena en este espectáculo de estreno: José Serrano y Luis Ortega, cuyas calidades están reconocidas. Además, José Serrano ha coreografiado dos de los trece cuadros de 'Sabores'. Las caras están sonrientes: aquí se celebra con gusto el flamenco puro recién encontrado de nuevo. Y se hace recordando a la madre de Sara, Concha Baras, una de sus maestras.



Sara Baras en 'Sabores'
(Foto: Ignacio Gallego)

Andado el tiempo, hoy día Sara Baras ya pertenece a la minoría selecta de los mejores bailaroes de flamenco del mundo. Ofrece al público parisino su nuevo espectáculo desde el 19 de diciembre de 2005 hasta el 8 de enero 2006. Los trece cuadros de la obra hablan del flamenco, de todo el flamenco: tangos, tanguillos, seguiriyas, zambras, alegrías... pues es una forma de homenaje al arte vivido dentro de la gaditana desde siempre. Acompañada por su cuerpo de ballet, por los dos bailaroes, y por seis músicos dirigidos por José María Bandera, retiene aún el papel de la diva. Cuando sale de la escena, básicamente, para cambiarse de vestuario, la distancia con sus compañeros se acrecienta. Por comparación, los demás parecen bien insípidos. Y cuando entra de nuevo, los demás se abren para dejarla en el centro de las miradas. Adulada, muestra una agradable exhibición técnica. Impresionante. Zapateado perfecto, profesional, tan rápido como si estuviera levitando algunos centímetros por encima del suelo. Demasiada técnica y no bastante flamenco, eso es lo que le ha sido reprochado

muchas veces. Y para combatir estas críticas, ha aprendido a emplear los gestos lentos, los movimientos graciosos, llenos de dulzura y de amor, que también dan fuerza al baile flamenco. Y cuando se lanza en un zapateado diabólico, la dulzura ya pasada deja lugar a la determinación y a la voluntad.



Sara Baras en 'Sabores' (Foto: Ignacio Gallego)

Luego, vuelve a escena vestida con un traje púrpura. La luz se vuelve roja, atrás, los bailaores del cuerpo de baile están sentados, y miran, sin parar, aquellos pies famosos por su velocidad. Siguen el ritmo de Sara con jaleos de ánimo. El cuerpo de la bailaora se parece a una flor que no sabe si ya está en el momento de abrirse a mostrar su belleza al mundo. Por un momento, da su ser entero al público parisino. Y al momento siguiente, se pregunta si tiene el deber de ofrecer así, tan fácilmente, su arte a los espectadores. De hecho, ya sabe que el juicio será superficial y se va con un gesto orgulloso de la mano y la cabeza alta. La sala vuelve a la oscuridad.

Algunos segundos después, las luces se encienden de nuevo. Luis Ortega aparece con las castañuelas en las manos. Presenta una demostración de su genio, sin más música que el ritmo de sus zapatos. Al poco Sara Baras vuelve y termina con un toque bien personal. Tiene una rosa en la boca. Las letras de José Carlos Gómez se apoderan de la escena. Ella tiene el rostro concentrado, por la fuerza que está a punto de manifestarse. El ritmo va 'in crescendo'. Las bailaoras, al fondo, la acompañan con ánimo. Estamos en Sevilla o en Jerez, en un tablao típico, o tal vez en un café cantante antiguo. Todos los ingredientes reunidos dan veracidad a la escena. Todos acaban acercándose hasta Sara, repitiendo por última vez la copla.

Abajo el telón. Aplausos fuertes. Sara Baras ha conquistado al público parisino otra vez. Y le rinde homenaje. Vuelve varias veces a saludar con todo su cuerpo de ballet. Por fin, improvisa un último baile, seguida de José Serrano y Luis Ortega. Último saludo. Hasta el próximo espectáculo... mañana mismo.

SABORES
—PRESS—

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First Night reviews

January 22, 2005

Dance

Sara Baras

DONALD HUTERA AT SADLER'S WELLS, EC1

★★★★☆

SARA BARAS, choreographer, director and star of her own contemporary flamenco company, is a class act. This styleconscious Spaniard's show *Sueños* (Dreams), part of the Flamenco Festival London at Sadler's Wells, is immaculately staged.

The production values are obvious: an extremely sound-sensitive floor, artificial smoke billowing from the wings, sleekly gorgeous costumes and stark shafts of overhead light to shift our attention seamlessly between Baras's seven dancers and six musicians.

Baras's ensemble choreography favours symmetrical, unison formations, a multiplication of the machine-tooled dancing executed in her solos. Her attractive company pound out rhythms and strike sculptural shapes, but it is her talent they frame and her vision they embody.

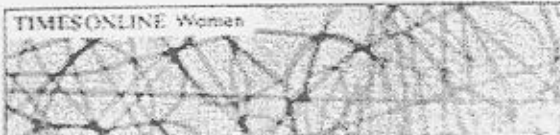
With her erect carriage, arched back, trailing arms, twining wrists and footwork that is hugely subtle, exacting and varied, Baras is in total command of her art. Hitching up her skirt, in a burst of controlled fury she'll rattle out a thunderously fast tattoo. The coda to this womanly severity is a girlishly beaming smile.

Another solo, with Baras's lean curves slipped into a one-piece trouser suit, is breath-catchingly strong. She also duets with matadorial guest artist José Serrano. They dance like lovers, equals and icons, with mutual pride and formalised desire.


As impressive as *Sueños* is, I'm not sure how deep it goes. Baras's brand of designer flamenco is not soul-bruisingly wild but, rather, sharply calculated and with the rough edges cleanly sliced off. Hot? Very, but perhaps a slightly dry heat. Still, Baras and company connect. The opening night response was ecstatic.

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Fancy footwork and diva worship

Dance

BALLET FLAMENCO
SARA BARAS
Sadler's Wells
LONDON ★★★

MAYA PLISETSKAYA
80TH BIRTHDAY
TRIBUTE
Royal Opera House
LONDON ★★

As the British winter drags on, the Sadler's Wells Flamenco Festival promises a fortnight of bright colour and rousing rhythm. Featuring a range of singers, dancers and flamenco styles, it opened with Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras.

Baras, who appeared at the 2005 festival, has "got art" since we last saw her. Her strength and skill is still longer for it. There's a lot of waiting around. The show *Sabores*, which premiered in Paris in December, starts with an artful picture of stage preparation. A hat, a guitar and a pair of shoes wait in a spotlight; dancers wander on, fixing their hair, buckling their shoes. A

portrait of a flamenco dancer is carried on, then carried off again.

Baras and her troupe show fluent upper bodies, tightly drilled corps-work. The women swish and flow, and their rhythm has some bite. Baras herself is an exuberant dancer with a pliant torso. Her solos start with slow, sweeping movements before erupting into stamped footwork. She draws herself up with authority, but she doesn't quite have the grandeur for those early movements. She's at her best when at her most cheerful and extravagant. In those introductions, I found myself waiting for the explosion.

It is worth waiting for: Baras has strong feet and clear rhythm, putting a range of sound into her footwork. Baras's first show was a recital with an all-female cast. She has since shown an interest in dances traditionally danced by men, showing off her force without loss of femininity. In *Sabores*, she has men in her corps, plus two male guest artists. Luis Ortega dances a strutting, macho solo,

taking forceful poses that he can't quite live up to. Those braced positions need stronger, clearer line, greater weight and conviction. José Serrano, a regular guest with Baras, is a more relaxed performer, showing greater authority and cleaner footwork.

Baras designs her own costumes, often to striking effect. One jersey dress is shaded from dove-grey neckline to black hemline. She folds the full skirt around her, making stripes and patterns, or flings it out in a swirl of soft shadow.

Baras is an essentially traditional performer, and her new stagecraft tends to dilute the effect. Attention is distracted away from the heart of flamenco, the shared rhythm created by dancer and musician.

I had never seen a dancer take a standing ovation just for walking on. The Bolshoi ballerina Maya Plisetskaya turned 80 last year, with galas in Moscow and now London. At Covent Garden, the audience rose to its feet at the sight of her, while she conducted the applause, undulating her long arms



Slow, as if warming up for just one more Dying Swan.

Plisetskaya was one of 20th-century ballet's stars. Fifty years on, her name is still associated with a flying leap; the Plisetskaya head-kick, a jump with back leg flung up behind. Film, screened at several points, recorded her thrilling athleticism. In her grand finale,

Ave Moya, a piece of diva worship by Béjart, she waves fans, does geisha tumbles (which don't work in 4th heels) before demanding more applause.

Plisetskaya aside, this was a starry gala, arranged by Andris Liepa with big games from the Kirov, Royal Ballet and Bolshoi, and music from the orchestra

of English National Ballet. It was mostly insubstantial fare, with plenty of frills and sequins. Sadly, the drama came when the Royal Ballet's Ivan Putrov, dancing gorgeously, fell and stayed down, obviously injured.

Zoë Anderson
Flamenco Festival to 25 February (0870 737 7737)

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Cover photograph of Dolly Parton by Dennis Carney



FEBRUARY 19, 2006

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event of the week

Olé! Spain's finest kick their heels at Sadler's Wells's annual flamenco festival: review, page 31

my must-sees

Chris Addison Comedian and actor, recently seen in BBC2's *The Thick of It*, picks his highlights of the week. Check out his website: www.chrisaddison.com



OPERA *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Royal Opera House) A fantastic production in every way. If you've never been to see opera, this is how to start

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performance of the week

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Dance

Flamenco with a fuller flavour

At Sadler's Wells's flamenco festival, theatrical presentation and impressive footwork win out over the wailing, says DAVID DOUGILL

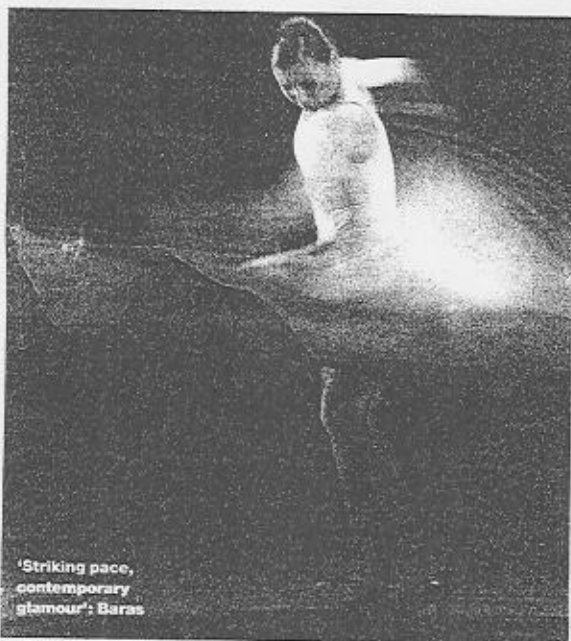
Flamenco shows have long been a popular attraction in the London theatre, ranging from the unostentatious of Paco Peña's company to the self-indulgent flamenco-fusion spectaculars of the over-glossed Joaquín Cornejo. In recent years, Sadler's Wells has consolidated an eager audience for Andalusian dance, music and song in an eclectic self-contained season. The currently running third annual Flamenco Festival London is the biggest so far — and how the fans flock.

The women are elegant in a succession of couture gowns; none of those floor-trailing flounces that can give the impression of thrashing about in a cabbage patch. Baras is first revealed as a pair of curlicuing hands in a spot of light for *A Fuego Lenito*, then we get the rest of her — the striking pace, glossy hair, arms that are steely, sinuous, tendrily, flashing legs beneath a seductively raised skirt. This is a fast and emphatic trio with Luis Ortega and Jose Serrano, which, at one point, unaccountably goes kissy-kissy.

Ortega, tall, bearded, with castanets, and Serrano, less tall, with a big hat, dance fierce solos of similar stamp. Baras herself is prodigious in her percussive footwork, from faint tapping as delicate as breath to furious farragos, rattling like a machinegun — a veritable stampede, I must say, though, that this endless floor-bashing can be cumulatively exhausting for a non-devotee. Baras's virtuosity is undeniable, but I prefer her in frolicsome mood rather than when she is embodying the soul's pangs. It is during those numbers in the latter vein that the flamenco singer bellows with desperate and (for me) impenetrable anguish — the bane of what I think of as the wailing season.

There was more of this in Tuesday's performance. *Asimetrías* (Asymmetrical), a one-night debut by the *Compañía Andres Marin*, which got on my nerves from the go. Marin is a flamenco avant-gardist. He has a stubble beard and wears black almost-tights that don't suit his legs. He, too, is an impressive footworker — his flurries of rat-a-tat-tat accompanied by drumbeats and amplified on miked aluminium sounding boards for his first solo. His style is narcissistic, with much tedious posturing, long pauses between the outbursts, or walking around, looking sullenly down his nose at the audience. Not once does he smile. It feels like fit-and-start choreography, and if it's meant to seem spontaneous, it doesn't. His *Solea* number is particularly pretentious, when he performs a duet with his projected large shadow, to pseudo-religious music by Ligeti.

A well-matched trio of attractive women provide dancing support intermittently, but only at the end get to share the stage with Marin. The singers wail their hearts out ("Olé" for some, "Oh no" for me). I found much relief in the two guitarists' musical interludes. □



'Striking pace, contemporary glamour': Baras

We opened last weekend with Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras in a new show, *Sabores* (flavours). Baras is one of Spain's biggest names in modern theatrical flamenco; she dances traditional styles but with a super-sheen of contemporary glamour. *Sabores* starts with a pretend scene of backstage gossip, trying out bits of dance, putting on shoes, wheeling around a rack of costumes and a travelling trunk (as well as a portrait of Baras's mother, *maestra* Concha, the dedicatee of the production). But then, forget any suggestion of a roadshow or spontaneous numbers (until the *fiesta finale*). From the moment the musicians and singers take their places on podiums, in white light beaming down onto an all-black stage, this is a tautly choreographed, mostly brisk-paced, chicly dressed and sleekly lit parade of a dozen items, in which Baras's excellent troupe — two leading men, and five women and four men of the ensemble — share honours.

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reviews first night

www.timesonline.co.uk/firstnight

Dance

Sara Baras

Sadler's Wells

★★★★☆

DONALD HUTERA

London enjoys a reputation as home to a large and discerning body of flamenco enthusiasts. Sadler's Wells has helped to build and sustain audience interest by regularly programming some of the best practitioners of the form.

Flamenco Festival London is the venue's third annual celebration of the dance, song and music of southern Spain. On the dance front the work ranges from big, flashy groups such as Ballet Nacional de España (Fri-Sun) and the superstar Cristina Hoyos's Ballet Flamenco de Andalucía (Feb 22-25) to Compañía Antonio el Pipa's smaller-scale tribute to the traditional gypsy tablao (Feb 21) and the more avant-garde stylings of

Compañía Andrés Marín (tonight).

The two-week season kicked off with *Sabores* ("flavours") by Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras. Everything about this sleek, seamless show was polished to a high-gloss sheen. This included the choreography, stylish costumes and sophisticated lighting, all of which were either executed or overseen by Baras. The care she takes with all the elements of a production, including her own dancing, pays off handsomely.

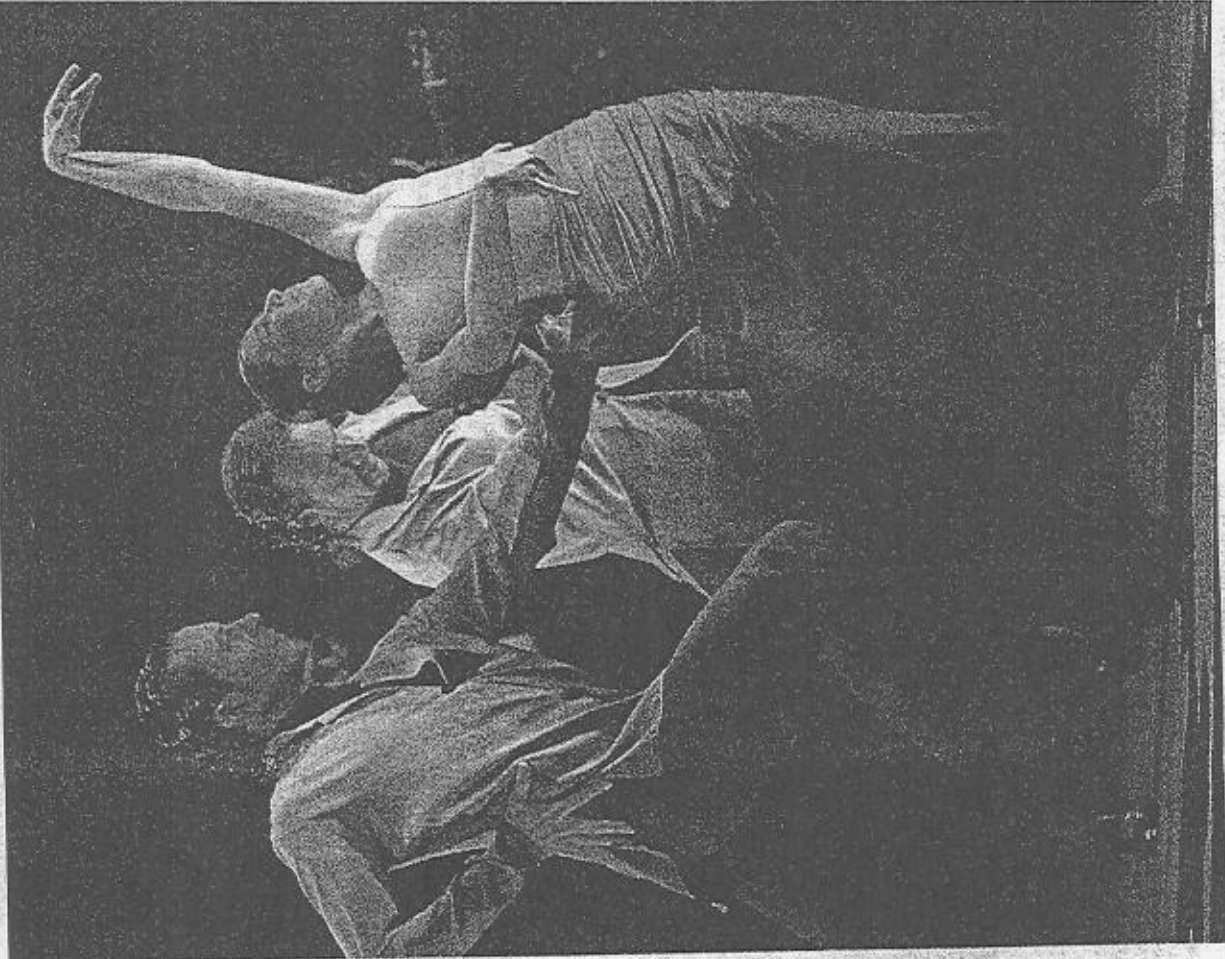
The performance began in a deceptively casual mode, with dancers and musicians mingling in a friendly, quasi-backstage manner as they prepared to get down to business. Flamenco's familiar proud poses were tested and flamingo-like arms briefly unfurled.

After a momentary blackout Baras appeared, initially as a

pair of hands, curling in an intense beam of light. Her first dance was shared with the guest artists José Serrano and Luis Ortega.

The two men each had a solo. Lean, vulpine and clacking castanets, Ortega burst into beats from a fluid series of erect stances. He was like an introspective torador with a touch of the catwalk about him. Serrano was looser and more expansive, peppering his sunny but still commanding dance with neat jumps and strides.

As a dancer Baras is a sharp-footed, iron-willed sorceress adept at fanning the flames of her own emotion. The audience loved her. I admire her many talents, without quite surrendering to her. Still, throughout this impressive show Baras's young, attractive ensemble of dancers provided her with excellent support, as did the all-male musical sextet.



When the hired help goes on the rampage...

The Creeper

Playhouse, London

It's scary the way some shows worm their way into the West End, making out they're going to be decent before proving quite breathtakingly rotten. *The Creeper* ought to be a forgotten gem, right? Penned in 1965 by Pauline Macaulay, it's a domestic thriller laced with homosexual and class tensions, potentially comparable to Pinter's *The Servant* and here revived by Bill Bryden with a sterling cast.

Ian Richardson's Edward initially seems the sinister predator. A wealthy old eccentric who likes playing games, he has placed an ad seeking a young male home help who'll be lavishly cosseted. But everything will be forfeited if the contract is terminated. Alan Cox's frowning, dangerously bitter Michel, a Soho bohemian being jettisoned even as the new boy arrives. Oliver Dimsdale's Maurice whose good-as-gold meekness could be a front.

In fact Maurice's somnambulant habit of psychotically throttling balloons with neckties is a bit of a give-away. No one could accuse Macaulay of being crafty at plotting. Murder-mysteries don't come much creakier than *The Creeper*. It's like some dusty revenant from regional rep, and the climactic slaughter is fantastically silly, with the killer prowling round in a Red Indian fancy-dress outfit.

The acting, by contrast, is pretty impeccable even if Michel verges on a camp, bitchy caricature. Dimsdale deserves more work. Harry Towb is endearing as the doddering butler, and Richardson has tenderness as well as dry humour. But they must just be in this for the money, right? KB
To April 22, 0870 060 6631

DANCE

Ole! It's the flamenco revival



Jenny Gilbert

Flamenco Festival

Sadler's Wells
LONDON

You have only to look at the men's hairstyles to see what's happened to flamenco. Fifteen years ago, when Sadler's Wells began championing the art form, the typical male ballaoero was a weaselly type in an ill-fitting jacket and out-of-date perm. Now there's a touch of the catwalk about him: he's young and sleek and looks as if he hangs out in Madrid's coolest clubs - many of which, incidentally, now host flamenco nights. At home in Spain, what was once a music-and-dance form obsessed with old people's memories has been reborn as a vibrant focus for fashion and creativity, and the stupendous opening event of this year's Flamenco Festival London broadcast that status delightedly.

Sara Baras, the emerging queen of the current generation, is neither a moderniser nor an outright purist. While she favours a slick, tightly choreographed presentation, framing solo numbers with sharply synchronised chorus work and ditching traditional frills for a streamlined look, she takes care not to blur the old distinctions of style. In *Señores* ("flavours"), 13 numbers - whose titles simply describe their musical form: tangos, soleas, bulerías and so on - run one after another without a break. It makes for a hefty evening - aim set two hours without interval - but the way Baras modulates the show's energy minute by minute ensures that the dynamic never flags. In fact, the excitement builds to such dizzying intensity that your normally sober critic was heard to emit an involuntary yelp.

The start was artfully relaxed, with dancers and musicians mingling as if they were still backstage, limbering up and chatting and strapping their shoes. A rail of costumes is wheeled on, then off again, followed by a large painting of a woman in a mantilla (perhaps Baras's mother: her teacher and dedicatee of this show). Then, like mist, the scene dissolves to reveal an impressive line of seated musicians: three male singers, three guitarists, the now statutory percussionist beating an amplified box, and a fiddle player - a novel touch. The sound is rich and complex, a mite jazzy, but never aggressively loud; another sign that the new flamenco has come of age. Once, you covered your ears.

Generously, Baras shares her first appearance with two male guests, Jose Serrano



She motors through a martinete, drilling her heels like power tools

and Luis Ortega, then gives each an entire number to himself. Ortega, lean and wolfish, devotes his to a Seguiriya, using castanets to set up a sophisticated call-and-response with his feet. Serrano is looser and more playful in his alegrías, wrenching back the shoulders of his jacket, strutting and jumping and showing off with a grin. But it's Baras the crowd have come for, and she repays the compliment mightily. Sleek as a sphinx, fierce as an amazon, she motors through a martinete, drilling her heels like power tools while scything the air with her arms. Here is a big technique that suggests big, abstract ideas. When she reduces the dynamic to pianissimo an abyss seems to open up, with only the tremble of a heel between Baras and the silence of infinity.

jenny.gilbert@independent.co.uk

The festival continues to Sat, 0870 737 7757

Dizzying delight:

Sara Baras, queen of the new flamenco movement

LAURET LEWIS



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[DANCE]

The stamp of greatness

Sara Baras triumphs but *Giselle* star Ivan Putrov has a nasty fall in front of a houseful of Versace-clad 'New Russians' at Covent Garden



LUKE JENNINGS

Ballet Flamenco: Sara Baras
Sadler's Wells, London EC1

Giselle
Royal Opera House, London WC2

Maya Plisetskaya 80th birthday tribute
Royal Opera House, London WC2

cante, the haunting gypsy vocalisation that tells, invariably, of loss and longing. Handclaps are added and the *bailaora* dances, her movements the embodiment of the *cante*.

The music builds – guitars, violins, percussion – and the ensemble joins in, hands and wrists flaring, heels stamping like hailstones on a corrugated iron roof. The best moments, though, find Baras alone, levelling that sea-green gaze at us over the taut curve of her arm. She seems to manipulate time and silence. The Spanish call it 'duende', the soul-force of flamenco.

A *cabriole* is one of the more spectacular steps in the ballet dancer's repertoire. Throwing one leg up into the air in front of him, he whips the other up beneath it to make a double beat in the air. When done correctly, there is a dramatic moment of stillness at the top of the jump, but you have to be careful. Hang too luxuriantly in that armchair of spotlight air, and, as the US test pilots used to put it, you screw the pooch.

Last week, I watched the Royal Ballet's Ivan Putrov carry off a fabulous *cabriole* sequence in his act two variation in *Giselle*, which he was dancing with Roberta Marquez. In this part of the ballet, he is being forced to dance himself to death by the vengeful spirits of wronged women, and the variation, all huge leaps, expresses his desperation to escape the cold earth. Putrov performed it flawlessly and the following day, he and Marquez appeared in an 80th birthday tribute to the celebrated Bolshoi ballerina Maya Plisetskaya. This was a very 'new Russia' event, with much Versace couture and many diamond-studded cellphones in evidence and, as the curtain rose, corporate sponsors' names flashed on to a screen, surely a first for the Royal Opera House.

SABORES, THE new show from flamenco dancer Sara Baras, begins in an intimate, almost conversational manner. The dancers saunter on, buttoning jackets and pulling on shoes. The musicians pick up their instruments. Heels begin to drill out the beat, legs to extend into sultry lines. Baras enters with two male soloists. She is a compact, slender-waisted figure with green eyes, dramatic cheekbones and chestnut hair lacquered glossily to her head.

As her arms begin their sinuous interplay, her gaze is intense, but her professional frown quickly dissolves into a laugh as she and her partners are overtaken by the dance. The piece is named *A fuego lento* and it is about challenge, about moves hurled down like gauntlets, answerable only by routines of even fiercer commitment and passion. Later numbers are more reflective.

Baras, 34, comes from Cadiz, a windy city whose walls are battered by the sea, and beneath the exuberance of *alegría*, the local flamenco form, there is something of the loneliness of the place. Typically, pieces begin with the



Sinuous: Sara Baras at Sadler's Wells. Photograph by Adrian Dennis/AFP/Getty Image

The best moments find Baras alone, levelling that sea-green gaze at us

Plisetskaya herself appeared twice. Still fantastically glamorous – 'Who does her face?' the woman behind me breathed in amazement – she walked through brief snatches of her signature ballets to standing ovations. But the occasion was about more than bling and ballet. The Soviet system made Plisetskaya a star, but it also held her prisoner. As a child, she saw her father summarily shot by Stalin's henchmen, and it was later made clear to her that her relatives, many of them senior figures in the ballet establishment, could expect no mercy should she ever consider defecting to

the West. Given this grim backdrop, her career is all the more extraordinary.

So it was a resonant evening, at many levels. Putrov and Marquez's *Giselle* *de deux* came early in the tribute programme and it was immediately apparent that Putrov was going for broke. His first *cabriole* was high, the next even higher. The takeoff was perfect, but moment later, he was on the deck, his twisted beneath him, desperately signalling for the curtain to be brought down.

The incident was a reminder that ballet, dancers – and particularly male dancers – take real physical risks. In 2004, an agonising knee injury ended the career of Royal Ballet principal Johan Persson and in 2004, English National Ballet's Thomas Edur fell on stage and snapped his Achilles tendon; his career was saved by surgery and a year of rehabilitation. Very few dancers avoid injury: soon or later, and with varying degrees of seriousness, everyone screws the poo. Fingers crossed, then, for Ivan Putrov.

The unmistakable stamp of a flamenco superstar

DANCE

Sara Baras

SADLER'S WELLS

SARA Baras is one of those performers you just can't take your eyes off. Born in Cádiz, in 1971, the dancer-choreographer radiates technical brilliance, unshakeable self-belief and intoxicating pizzazz. In other words, she's a walking definition of a star.

The show with which she and her troupe launched Sadler's Wells's annual *Flamenco Festival* (as welcome a winter warmer as one can imagine) was called *Sabores*, or "flavours", and aptly so. It was essentially an 80-odd minute, 13-part whistlestop tour through a range of flamenco's many *palos* - or "styles" - from bolero to tango to *seguiriya*, and so on.

It began in a manner that called to mind, of all things, *Stop Making Sense*, Jonathan Demme's 1984 movie with eccentric rockers Talking Heads, in that the stage was pieced together before our very eyes. With flamenco-lite purring blandly from the speakers, chairs were brought on and arranged, costumes chosen, bodies warmed up. And then, with a spirited bolero, it finally kicked off.

Thankfully, there was no attempt at narrative. Rather, Baras, her corps, two guest *bailaores* (including boyfriend José Serrano) and six on-stage musicians ushered you through the *palos*, building a progressive head of steam that finally exploded with the *fin de fiesta*, the only section apart from the opening when the entire company were on stage together.

In interviews, Baras has made no bones about the fact that she likes her offerings to be immaculately produced, which *Sabores* was - perhaps excessively so. It tended to be far more the sort of spectacle you'd watch on, well, a fashionable London stage than stumble across in an Andalusian town square at midnight, and I'm not sure the slightly arch prologue and fancy lighting really stoked the steps' fire.

That said, the corps were never less than excellent, and when Baras herself let rip, any complaints melted swiftly away. Elegantly proportioned (compact but leggy, slim but feminine), she whirled her dress around herself with such verve that it virtually made any partner redundant, her hips so mobile that they deserved their own passport. In the *martinete* and *zambra*, her below-the-knee movement was just dazzling, so articulate and impassioned that her feet became hypnotic, quickfire percussion instruments.

It was a rare treat, too, to be at a performance where irony-free *¡Olé!*s constantly erupted from the audience. But most fun of all was the 10-minute encore, which saw the entire company cluster round, whooping and clapping, as Baras, one guitarist, her two soloists and even her still-svelte mother and mentor Concha stepped out one by one and did their stuff.

Suddenly, you really were in the shadow of the Alhambra, the warm stone underfoot, the *fino* sherry slipping down. And, with the brilliant Ballet Nacional de España starting their three-day run on Friday, it was also a tantalising taste of things to come.

Festival until Feb 25. Tickets: 0870 737 7737. This review appeared in some earlier editions.

Mark Monahan

Reviews

Spanish spin doctor kicks off flamenco festival

Dance

**Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras
Sadler's Wells, London**
★★★★★

Sara Baras is one of Spain's proudest flamenco exports. Such is the control of her footwork that she can flip in a second from an awesome, rhythmic drilling to a delicate web of sound. Such is the eloquence of her arm movements that they can evoke the steel of a toreador as well as the insinuating charm of a houri. When her turns start flashing, you know this is a woman can dance up not just a flamenco storm, but a hurricane.

Yet commanding as Baras's technique is, any resemblance between her and the Gypsy divas of tradition ends there. She radiates an urbane gloss that looks as though it has come from the smart shops of Madrid rather than any local street market. And on stage, the performance style she conjures for herself

Sky's the limit G2, page 20
Jonathan Glancey on Richard Rogers' colossal new airport terminal in Madrid



and her 11 dancers aims for a similarly polished sophistication.

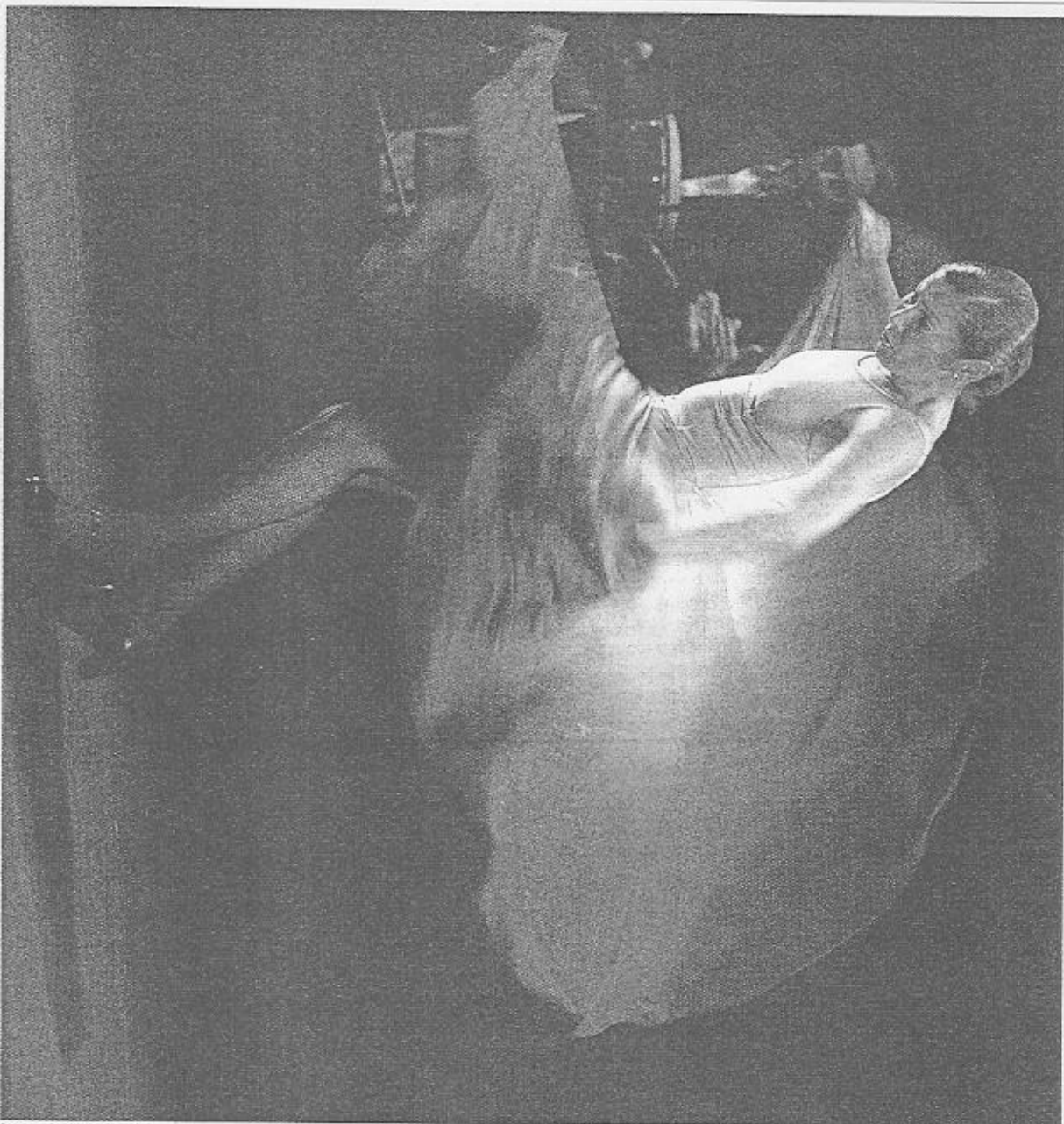
As Sabores, her latest show, reveals, Baras is an impressively slick choreographer. She has a superb grasp of pace, weaving a tight thread between solo and ensemble dances, between the jauntiness of an Alegrias and the darkness of a Solea. She also possesses a killer instinct for the dramatic moment. When Baras begins a solo, she may wait in near-darkness, clapping a tense little rhythm before suddenly unleashing her body's force. When hitting a climax, she will freeze in the spotlight, her stillness suddenly electric. When focusing the style of each number, she isolates a single feature – a sinuous pattern of arms in one, an almost militaristic display of footwork in another.

Disappointingly, however, what Sabores also reveals is Baras' susceptibility to half-baked symbolism and fussy window-dressing. The show opens with a prologue of the dancers warming up backstage that is all forced bonhomie and faked spontaneity. And the numbers that follow throw up odd bits of lacked-on narrative. The trio, *A Fuego Llenito*, collapses into mawkishness when Baras and her two partners begin embracing with earnest but inexplicable gestures of affection. Various props – a rose and a hat – elicit equally baffling displays of emotion. Is it that Baras doesn't fully trust in the dance to engage us? Or is there some other subtext that we don't get?

This show is advertised as a homage to Baras's mother, Concha, who appears herself during the final encores. But the pair's relationship is not articulated to the rest of us – and Sabores ends up as a brilliant display of dance that is cluttered with too many redundant effects.

Judith Mackrell

The Flamenco festival at Sadler's Wells, London EC1, runs until February 25.
Details: www.sadlers-wells.com



Sara Baras in *A Fuego Llenito* from *Sabores* Photograph: Tristram Kenton

Raw passion restrained

FLAMENCO FESTIVAL

Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras

Sadler's Wells

★★★★☆

Sarah Frater

CHOREOGRAPHY is inevitable in flamenco shows, but it's the free-style solos that set your heart a-racing. Little compares to the sight of musicians, dancers, and singers clapping and chanting, and cheering each other as they improv their steps with exuberance and flair.

It captures what we love about flamenco, its authenticity and spontaneity, and the sense of it not having been messed around with before it gets to the stage.

Sara Baras opened the third flamenco festival in as many years at Sadler's Wells on Friday night, and it was the free-form finale that roused the spirits. Despite her incomparable technique, her seriousness, and her theatrical good taste, Baras and her troupe looked best when they loosened up. The men grabbed their coat tails with emphatic bravura, raising dust as they stamped the stage, while the women swirled their skirts with semaphoric allure.

It was both more funny and more serious than the faultlessly arranged dances, and like all things in short supply, it left you eager for more.

Sabores is the third piece in Baras's trilogy of shows best described as flamenco recitals. It features 12 musical numbers of pure dance, with two singers, four musicians and 12 dancers including Baras herself and two guest artists, José Serrano and Luis Ortega.

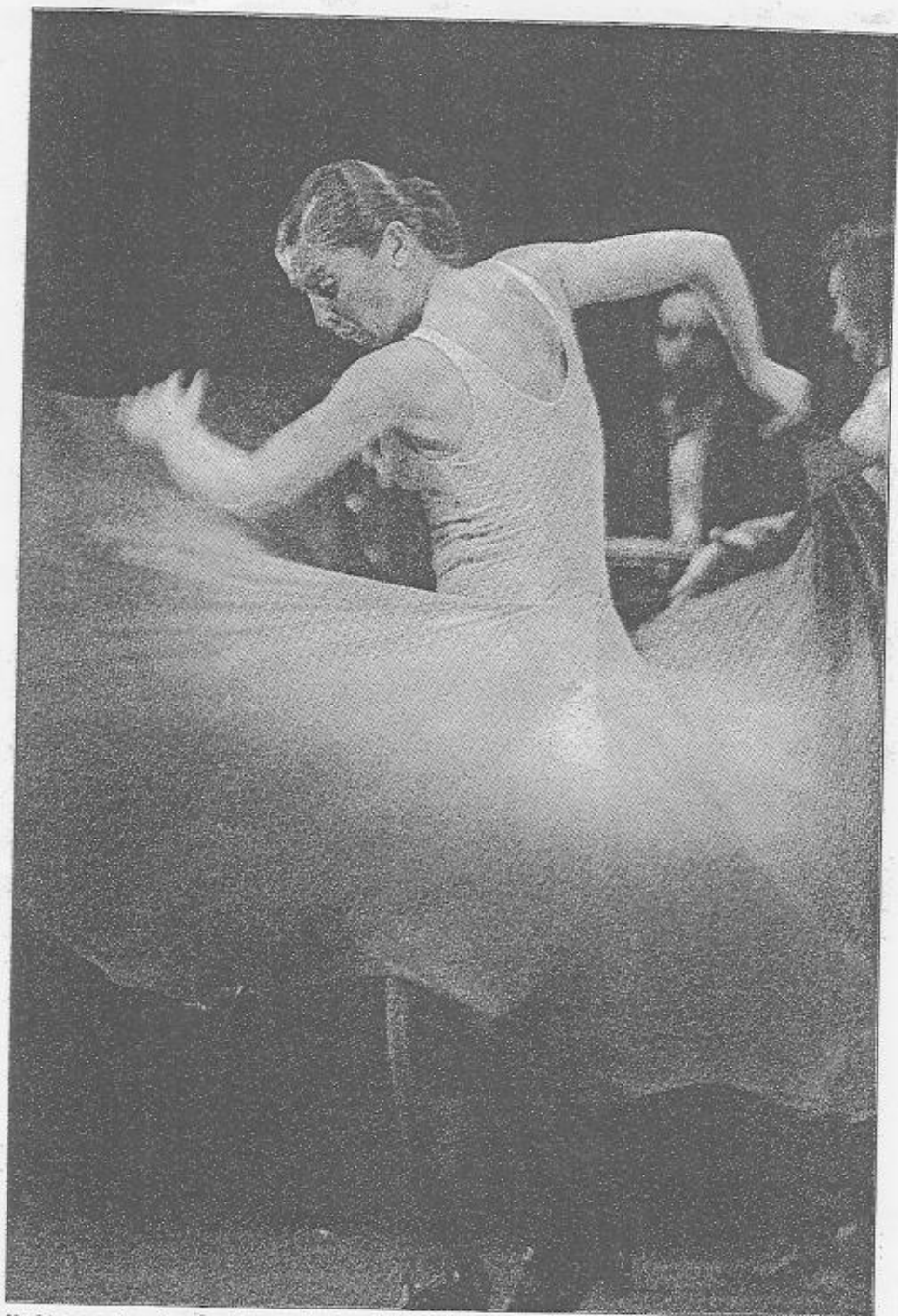
The show is a tight display, with Baras a mistress of stage craft. Her emotions and dancing are powerful but controlled, with nothing remotely rag-taggity about her style, no frayed flair, no gutsy rawness. Instead we see a perfectly presented show of faultless flamenco, with stable upper bodies and fearsome footwork.

The latter is awesome to behold, with Baras pounding the stage like a whirlwind-powered Hovercraft.

Her corps are almost as able, the women smoothly feminine, and the men sharp and robust, while the two guest dancers were pleasingly rough-cut by Baras standards.

However, the show feels too managed, too safe. Baras gives us little sense of our passions, the panic of love and the heart's whirling furies. If she would only cut herself some slack, her show would be terrifying.

● *Tonight only. Information: 0870 737 7737.*



Nothing rag-taggity about her style: Sara Baras presented a show of faultless, if safe, flamenco

Cinema
 Daily Telegraph Times Guardian Independent Financial Times Daily Mail Daily Express Evening St.

Theatre
 The Shulman Pass Missing Persons Trichter the Musical The Romans in Britain
 Royal Ballet Kirov Ball Jump
 Great Carriote On The Turn... Rotten

CRITICS CHOICE
 SUNDAY TELEGRAPH 7

Dance
 LOUISE LEVINE Flamenco Festival Sadler's Wells, London, 0870 737 7373 to 7737 to Sat. Gala of Andalusian (Wed), the ultra-traditional Comparsa Antonio el Pasa (Tue), and Ballet Flamenco de Andalusia closes the festival.
 Jump Peacock Theatre, London, 0870 737 7373 to next Sun. Korean martial arts comedy, an enjoyable fusion of Taekwondo and sitcom.

Royal Ballet Royal Opera House, London, 020 7304 4000, Thu, Sat. The latest mixed bill: Balanchine's Ballet Agave and Tchaikovsky's Pas de deux, Robbins's astounding Afternoon of a Fawn and Focina's Fanciful Cakes Accolta in the Sun and Alexander Anagnostou's special in the Bolshoi's (Thu). Trigg Scores make his debut as the Tarsus in Firebird (Sat) 12.30.

Review of reviews
 What the critics made of the latest first nights, big gigs, new albums and openings

	Guardian	Observer	Times	Sunday Times	Telegraph	Sunday Telegraph	Independent	Irish on Sunday	Overall
Film									
Good Night and Good Luck Dir. George Clooney	7 "Takes the war back to the front and spends 30 years' budget on one feature"	8 "George Clooney's best of his career. He fully deserves his Oscar nomination"	8 "Without being preachy, sad and being without a single moment of being self-righteous"	8 "The best-looking picture you'll see since '2001'"	8 "At the centre is a quite extraordinary performance by the German-born Schabert"	8 "George Clooney sinks through underdogly as a star war"	8 "Self-regarding, competent and fast"	5 "So narrow in scope that it's almost like a war movie"	7
Grassroots Dir. Lasse Hallstrom	6 "Sister provides a stirring performance, but only here"	5 "A hollow costume drama with little to recommend on the soundtrack"	2 "This is a play and a world where a woman makes a point of life in a loveless relationship"	2 "Thank God! It's more convincing as a gay comedy than as a straight love"	6 "An understated performance by the Swedish-born Schabert"	2 "A little like the last Carry On, but still enjoyable as a star war"	2 "The [celebrating] business of a gay comedy is a pity"	6 "A handsome piece... with far more nuance than the '01 hit"	4
Travee Lakaen (The Traveller Girl) Dir. Perry Ogden	6 "It is a lovely, watchable drama being almost unrecognisable"	6 "Impassioned and depressing"	6 "An elegant, possibly honest portrait of life in the margins"	6 "Not unlike a character from the information genre"	6 "An understated performance by the Swedish-born Schabert"	7 "Small but absorbing"	4 "You can barely distinguish what drama is and what is not"	8 "A cool, honest, quiet and smart set of comparisons"	6
Southwest Fair National, London	8 "Nicolaus Bayer's buoyant production contains a host of good performance"	7 "A gay reimagining of London"	5 "This is a play and a world where a woman makes a point of life in a loveless relationship"	6 "Darius and goes on"	9 "A wonderfully cast production of a play that is both funny and moving"	9 "The spring game is Richardson's pleasure to watch"	7 "Towards the end of it, you can't help but feel that the play is a little bit better"	3 "A cool, honest, quiet and smart set of comparisons"	6
Blackbird Albery, London	8 "The first feature has the best film of the year in a starring theatrical experience"	7 "Provides an unrelenting image of obsessive love"	8 "Roger Alton and both terrific"	8 "Piper's performance is the best I've seen in a long time"	9 "An extraordinary performance by the Swedish-born Schabert"	9 "A two-hour acting masterpiece"	7 "Towards the end of it, you can't help but feel that the play is a little bit better"	3 "A cool, honest, quiet and smart set of comparisons"	8
The Creeper Playhouse, London	3 "When he has his methodical piece for the return to the West End?"	6 "The best economic of London"	3 "A comedy of manners, not quite a thriller, not quite anything"	6 "Darius and goes on"	2 "A top-notch production of a play that is both funny and moving"	4 "The spring game is Richardson's pleasure to watch"	3 "A cool, honest, quiet and smart set of comparisons"	4 "A cool, honest, quiet and smart set of comparisons"	4
Honour Wyndham's, London	6 "The play still has the occasional raw power"	6 "The best economic of London"	6 "A comedy of manners, not quite a thriller, not quite anything"	6 "Darius and goes on"	5 "A top-notch production of a play that is both funny and moving"	4 "The spring game is Richardson's pleasure to watch"	3 "A cool, honest, quiet and smart set of comparisons"	4 "A cool, honest, quiet and smart set of comparisons"	6
Ray Davies Other People's Lives (V2)	6 "An album that delivers as much as it has the best of the best"	6 "The best economic of London"	6 "A comedy of manners, not quite a thriller, not quite anything"	6 "Darius and goes on"	8 "A top-notch production of a play that is both funny and moving"	4 "The spring game is Richardson's pleasure to watch"	3 "A cool, honest, quiet and smart set of comparisons"	4 "A cool, honest, quiet and smart set of comparisons"	6
Music									
Scored Barbican, London	8 "A brilliant display of music that is clearly with a redemptive effect"	9 "The best economic of London"	6 "A comedy of manners, not quite a thriller, not quite anything"	6 "Darius and goes on"	8 "A top-notch production of a play that is both funny and moving"	4 "The spring game is Richardson's pleasure to watch"	3 "A cool, honest, quiet and smart set of comparisons"	4 "A cool, honest, quiet and smart set of comparisons"	8
Dance									
Ballet Flamenco Sara Barras Sadler's Wells, London	6 "A brilliant display of music that is clearly with a redemptive effect"	9 "The best economic of London"	6 "A comedy of manners, not quite a thriller, not quite anything"	6 "Darius and goes on"	8 "A top-notch production of a play that is both funny and moving"	4 "The spring game is Richardson's pleasure to watch"	3 "A cool, honest, quiet and smart set of comparisons"	4 "A cool, honest, quiet and smart set of comparisons"	8

February 18 - 24, 2006
 THE TIMES

TOP DANCE
 Debra Crane



JUMP

Martial arts meets slapstick in this highly enjoyable Korean show. Almost two hours of zany humour, acrobatics and taekwon-do. Peacock Theatre, Portugal Street, WC2 (www.sadlerswells.com 0870 7370337). Until Feb 26


The festival concludes with a range of artists in Gala de Andalucía (Mon), Comparsa Antonio el Pasa (Tue) and Ballet Flamenco de Andalucía, led by the flamenco superstar Cristina Hoyos (Wed-Sat). (See review, page 31.)
 Sadler's Wells, ECI

FLAMENCO FESTIVAL
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 Sadler's Wells, ECI

DANCE
 Sadler's Wells, ECI
 Feb 19, 2006
 David Douglas

FLAMENCO FESTIVAL
 Sadler's Wells, ECI
 Feb 19, 2006
 David Douglas

RAMBERT DANCE COMPANY
 Snape Maltings Concert Hall, Suffolk (01728 687110). Friday and Saturday
 Quadruple bill including Mark Baldwin's *Afternoon of a Fawn* (Tue), *Agave* (Wed), *Afternoon of a Fawn* (Thu), *Agave* (Fri) and *Afternoon of a Fawn* (Sat).
 Royal Ballet mixed bill (020 7304 4000). Friday 26 February (020 7304 4000).
 Birmingham Hippodrome (0870 730 1234). Wednesday to Saturday
 The Seasons, Carmina Buran (0870 730 1234).
 Birmingham Hippodrome (0870 730 1234).
 The Seasons, Carmina Buran (0870 730 1234).

Bloomberg.com▶  Print

London Flamenco Festival Offers Fewer Silk Frills, More Drama

Feb. 14 (Bloomberg) -- With a stamp of a heel, a flash of an eye and a click of the fingers, ``Flamenco Festival London," two weeks of dance, song, and gypsy music from southern Spain has opened at Sadler's Wells.

We have seen little Spanish dance in London in the past few years, yet everything about it has changed except the intensity and the tension that give it life.

The first night's curtain-raiser was ``Sabores," Sara Baras's recent new multipart work for her company, Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras. ``Sabores," or Flavors, gives a taste of each kind of Spanish dance from bolero to tango to martinete and redefines each with her trademark clear lines.

In addition to Baras's own solos, which show off her dazzling footwork and dramatic hands, she gives space to some older solo dancers, including Luis Ortega and Jose Serrano, to create their own dances within hers, and also to give her and her nine-member group a breather.

Ortega, elegant in a gray silk suit with red lining, seemed particularly happy in the flexibility this episodic kind of performance affords. Baras herself is a phenomenon, seen as the natural successor to the First Lady of flamenco, Cristina Hoyos.

Elegant Lines

She has blossomed with her own company, finding a maturity of line and elegance of position that was less obvious when she was working in the choreography of others. Her final solo is too long, though we can allow her that moment of self-indulgence because the rest of the varied program she presents is so solid.

Spanish dance has undergone a transformation. Gone are the frills, the over-macho strutting, the repetitious insistence on form over substance. In comes a conscious theatricality, discipline bent into the service of performance and an awareness of trying to please the audience.

The men are less risibly masculine, the women less feminine and more assertively female. The choreography is freer, the costumes more innovative. Genuine emotion has replaced the posturing of previous years and the dancers now seem to put their own stamp (no pun intended) onto each variation.

The dancing and music on show at Sadler's Wells now is terrifically exciting, closer perhaps to its origins in gypsy bars and camps from Seville to Cadiz. While Sadler's Wells is a long way from Granada, the advent of proper lighting, microphones and staging has given the individual dances a crowd-pleasing gloss that is more true to its entertainment traditions than the snooty, audience-ignoring conventions of recent years.

T-Shirts

Clothes have always been crucial to flamenco and they still are, though in a different way. Where once the men fussed with the points of their universal bolero jackets and the women performed complicated rituals with the tiers of their frilly skirts, now the men are sometimes dressed in sweaters or T-shirts, long jackets or just shirts. The women swish around them in evening gowns, casual skirts and peasant dresses and, yes, occasionally in torrents of silk.

Other than tap, flamenco is the only form of show dance, so far as I know, that depends on contact with the floor and not its ability to confound gravity. The technique is murderously difficult and dancers are usually born into flamenco families and begin training as soon as they can walk.

The speed of the feet, the rigidity of the posture and the undulation of the arms combine to work

against both gravity and balance. The rapid clicking of the heels and occasionally the fingers when castanets are used must synchronize with the music and the singers while appearing to operate independently.

It is a specialized taste, well worth acquiring.

``Flamenco Festival London'' is at Sadler's Wells through Feb. 25.

To contact the reporter on this story: Ruth Leon at ruthleon@aol.com.

Last Updated: February 13, 2006 21:37 EST

▶  **Print**

OTHER SHOWS

—PRESS—

CALENDAR

PART I

Friday, February 11, 2005

calendarfree.com



Photo: Stephen Lee for the Times

FACE TO FACE: Sara Baras and José Serrano make a debut at UCLA's Royce Hall on Wednesday night.

DANCE REVIEW

A chic technique

In 'Sueños,' Sara Baras' flamenco prizes invention over convention.

By LEVIN KATZ
Photo by [unreadable]

AT age 34, flamenco star Sara Baras doesn't dance with the weight of the art's resident sages or earth mothers. Nor does she embody private passions and the pride of the Gypsy underclass.

No, at UCLA's Royce Hall on Wednesday, Baras danced for pleasure, connecting with her audience through eye contact and gestures — even blowing kisses at one point. Indeed, you might label her Flamenco Lite, with no voluminous gowns, dark emotions or reverence for tradition blocking her sleek, contemporary display of spectacular technique and her love of dancing.

Baras' program may be titled "Sueños" (Dreams), but it reflects her attempt to wake up and demystify an art that many outsiders see as a closed enclave rooted in the past. Out go a number of antique structures and strictures; in comes a list of priorities topped by accessibility and excitement.

Working with eight other dancers — including guest artist José [See Dance, Page E20]

BOOK REVIEW

Greed in the mouse house

Almost every page of Stewart's 'Disney War' contains a new betrayal. And that gets old.

By RICHARD SCHEWEL
Special to the Times

Most in this behaving badly. It's a relatively new, relatively hot, journalistic sub-genre, pioneered by, among others, James H. Stewart, who last year turned his journalistic talents — he's a smooth writer and an indefatigable reporter — to the 1990s scandal-making of media conglomerates, the Walt Disney Co. This latest volume details the rise and initial instant demise of the company, was published in a recent issue of the New Yorker, it has become, to borrow a current term of art from the movie business, an "event" volume. Lawyers have been threatened. Newspapers have run stories about this or that portion of its contents. The publisher has refused to release the book to book and embargoed reviews.

Reading it, even in a single-sitting session, one is given to the experience, for the one hour, this portrait of the event. The sale as a read has an undeniably hypnotizing effect; you eagerly turn the pages — almost every one of which contains a new betrayal, a new example of human wickedness. On the other hand, in a certain point in the book, one believing badly become such believing predictably, therefore tediously.

Also, in some sense, ironically, by this I mean that once over their principal interactive barrier wall, the successes and failures of their company — and to some degree the content of the products they sell or attempt to purchase — are determined by a complex of forces rather than by the individuality of management strategies. Since so far all their decisions have ended up in evil rather than criminal court, so large an evil harm can be attributed to them, they kill only one another. Since the movies and television shows they decide to produce are, on the whole, neither better nor worse than those of their competitors, no major aesthetic consequences arise from their activities. The "eventful" Disney "privileges" remains in the same narrow, mainly banal, range that prevails in the rest of American pop culture.

It could be argued, I suppose, that, because Disney's stock is widely held, its failures harm the economic well-being of millions, but that's one of the stories of less flamboyant companies about which no one is writing books. In any case, as Richard Schewel, if [See Disney, Page E24]



BEFORE THE DRAMA: Michael Eisner, left, and Richard Dole, right, go out.

TELEVISION REVIEW

'Blues' loses some radiance

The autobiographical play has no story, simply fine actors in barely linked episodes.

By ROBERT LEVY
Photo by [unreadable]

"Lullaby Blues," which premieres Saturday night on HBO, brings Helen Santaguida's autobiographical one-act close to the great actor, and it's a good first step for the play of its kind.

"The Old Couple" and "The Sound of Music" notwithstanding, not all waves for the theater are eternally favorable to other work, and we hurried our last, George Washington played itself, in vain, mainly recognizing the habit of the leading actor (in his real-life surrogate mother, James "Nasty" Cusack) played here by S. Epifanio (Meyerson). They were "partners of distress of some sort, and they each had some experience with psychiatric hospital, alcohol, drugs, people, people — or drunk — and everyone of them had a story to tell." Here they are divided out an actor apiece, dominating whatever sense of mutual transference and person, somewhat the original "Blues" had had (George Washington, a "They Award Winner" for August Wilson's "Seven Guitars" and so on). This winner for "Lullaby Blues" and soon to be seen with "The Story" — an executive production [See "Blues," Page E26]

MOVIE REVIEW

A charmer with nary

[The review text is partially cut off at the bottom of the page.]

PERFORMING ARTS

'Sueños' pushes extended form

(Dances from *Pape El!*) Serrano — Baras experiments with long-form choreography: evolving ensembles full of challenging matched heelwork and in the opening septet, assaultive counter-rhythms introduced through the use of wooden canes. It's fresh and inventive, as fun as it goes, and her company executes it strongly.

As a choreographer and soloist, Baras likes persuasive rhythms that evolve into propulsive engines, and in one of her more amazing solo feats (repeated during the overture), she rapidly, evenly clugs across the stage, her feet not so much tapping as making ratcheting sounds that suggest wheels rolling over tracks.

While her foot-engines run with remarkable speed, force and clarity, her refined use of her arms and upper torso contributes variety and focus to her dances. A trio featuring Raúl Fernández and Raúl Prieto uses heelwork sparingly at first, building interest primarily through her sinewy reaches, liquid wrist-curls and dynamic shifts in position.

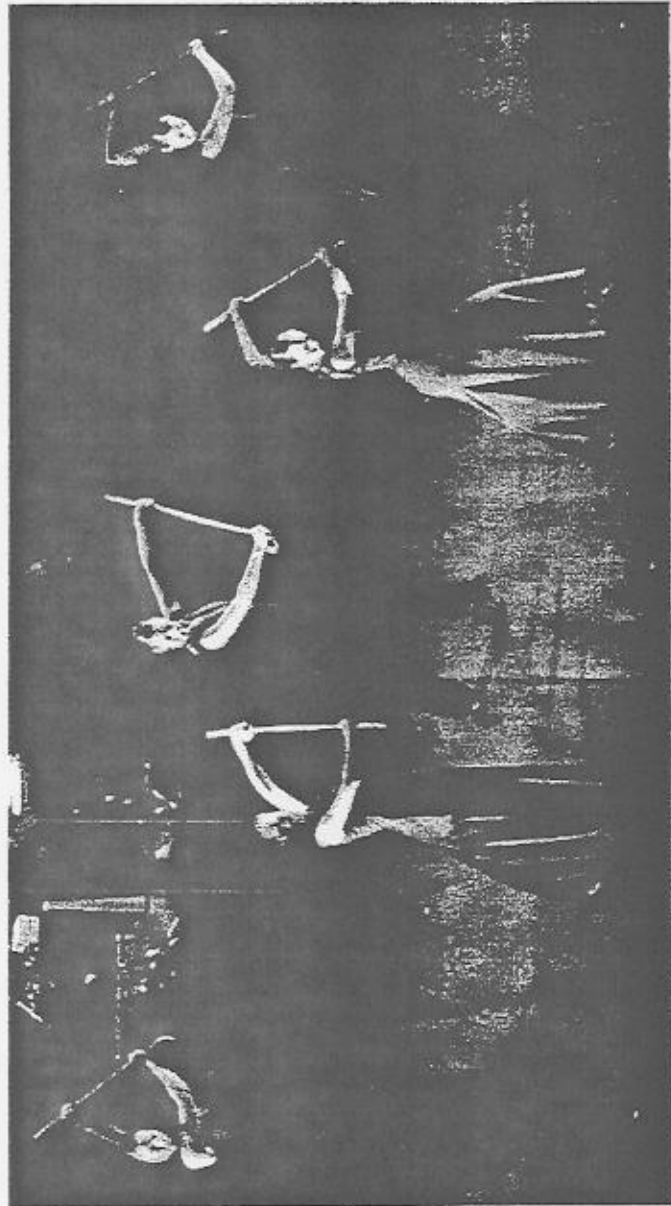
Just as masterfully her ability to

swiftly wrap a large, fringed shawl around her torso, swing it overhead, wield it like a bull-fighter's cape or fling it to the floor so that it becomes a kind of train behind her.

Her range of expression extends only from imperious to velleite, so when she dances opposite Serrano, it's not in a depiction of love or lust but simply to allow another kind of technical attack. Like partners finishing each other's sentences, they make overlapping movement statements, with Baras often taking over Serrano's high-velocity heel-phrases and completing them, adding an extra flourish or burst of speed as commentary.

Serrano's own solo places his flourishes of showpiece steps within a distinctive action plan and mood: constant restless, rootless stage-prodding and deliberately rough gestures and turns that define a man on the edge. At the end, his spiral down to a crouch on one knee seems a capitulation to despair — the only downbeat dance-image in this UCLA Live event.

On platforms behind the dancers, the musicians uphold flamenco intensity — especially



LORI SHIFFER FOR ANTON FINE

SWINGING ON STAGE: Dancers use wooden canes to drive the rhythm during their UCLA Live performance at Royce Hall.

singer Miguel de la Toleda and Saul Quirós — and the violin playing of Amador Groti excites soul.

Guitarists José María Banderín and Mario Montoya often introduce a dance segment with intimate and even contemplative musicianship. Finally, Anton Suárez not only reinforces dance

rhythms with his expert box-drumming but performs with pop drums and cymbals near the end of the program.

Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras is hardly the first or only company to update flamenco performance. However, "Sueños" re-

invents and even contemplative musicianship. Finally, Anton Suárez not only reinforces dance

is no pretentious New Flamenco charlatan trying to look like a rock star. Her credentials are impeccable: the only question is whether she sees flamenco dance as something bigger than just a happy diversion.

The company will also perform at the Arlington Theatre in Santa Barbara on Tuesday.

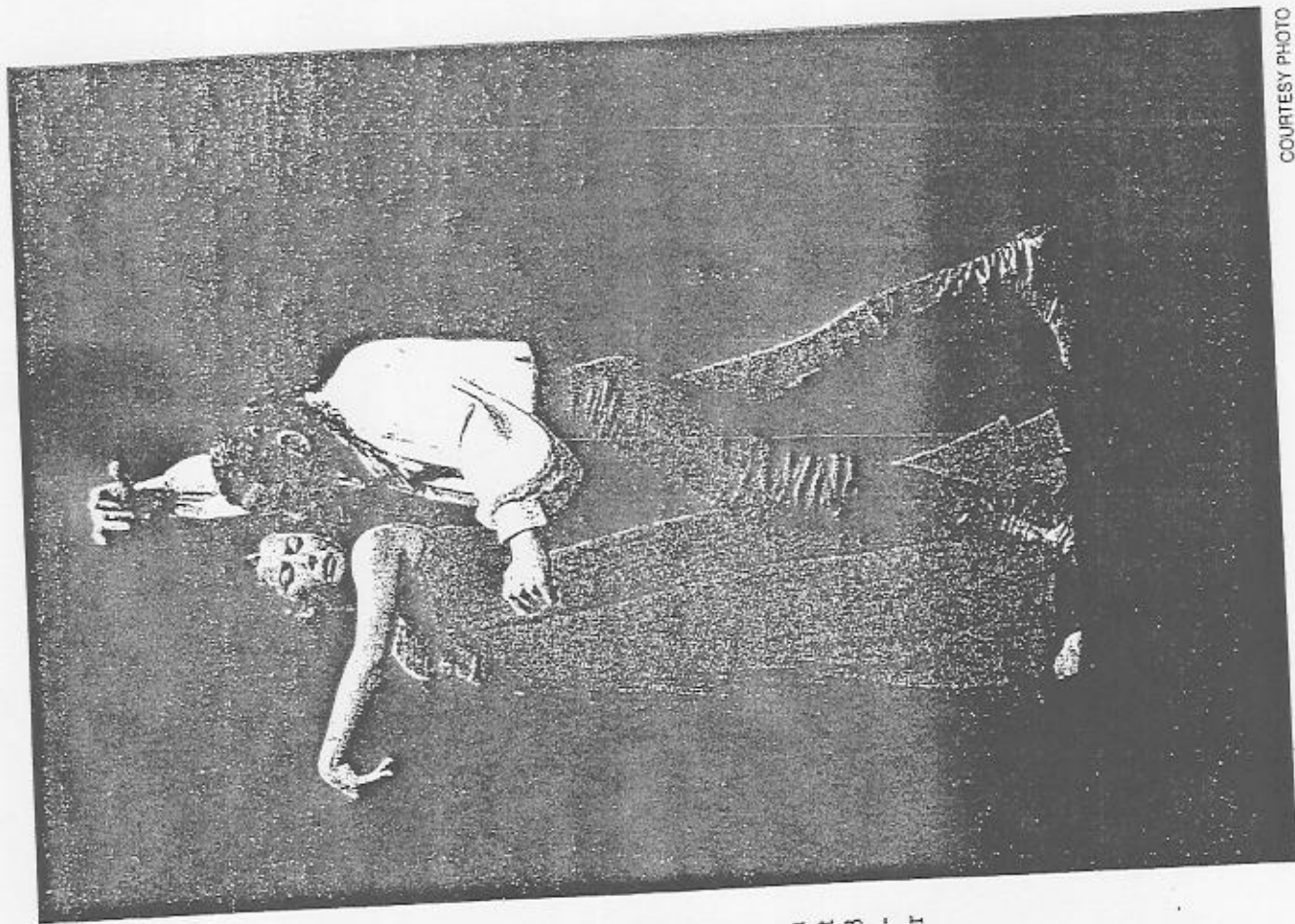
FEBRUARY 11 - FEBRUARY 17, 2005 VALLEY VOICE

Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras swirls into town

Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras will make its area debut performing its latest work "Suenos (Dreams)" on Tuesday, February 15 at 8 p.m. at the Arlington Theatre, 1317 State Street, Santa Barbara. One of Europe's most popular and celebrated dancers, the dynamic Sara Baras has received Spain's most prestigious dance award, the 2004 Premio Nacional de Danza, and recently made flamenco box office history with a record-breaking five-month show in Madrid. Baras and her 15-member company create *flamenco puro* at its finest and most essential, a perfect showcase for Baras' dazzling talent. This event is an ArtAbounds performance, presented by the Lobero and UCSB Arts & Lectures.

Baras is known for her brilliant footwork and powerful presence. She is joined by her company of eight women and seven musicians for "Suenos," which features her trademark style rooted in tradition yet still expanding the genre. In a twist on flamenco conventions, the all-female company redefines flamenco for women, journeying through many different styles in the process. Elegant and passionate, their technical prowess creates some of the finest flamenco in the world.

This residency is supported by the Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF) and the National Endowment for the Arts. Tickets for Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras are \$45 and \$35 for the general public and \$19 for UCSB students, who must show valid ID both at purchase and at the door. For tickets or more information, call the Arlington Ticket Agency at (805) 963-4408 or visit online at www.artsandlectures.ucsb.edu.



COURTESY PHOTO

Characteristic rhythms and ronnallina music augment the Ballet

The Guardian

Sara Baras

Sadler's Wells, London

★★★★☆

Sueños is essentially a series of traditional flamenco numbers, adapted for the stage by Sara Baras. A consummate and professional dancer, Baras has also been a poster girl and a catwalk model — and it shows. Instead of gaudy souvenir-doll frills, her costumes are classy enough for cocktails. And she knows exactly how best to present her company, using simple but dramatic lighting, clear compositions and a varied programme of dance and music.

The opening *martinete* sees the company of nine dancers beating out a stark rhythmic tattoo with their canes. The following *soleá* glisters with funereal beauty. A phalanx of women stalk the stage, as dark and glossy as ravens, unfurling their shawls like ominous black wings. Baras and José Serrano dance the *jaleo*: a slow, courtly circling that gives way to strident clapping and a rattlingly brilliant finale. The *farruca*, traditionally a male preserve, makes a powerful centrepiece. In trousers and a bolero jacket, Baras commands the stage in a tense solo of inexorable builds and sudden freezes. It is not simply her prodigious technical skill that make this a star turn, she also has tremendous presence, holding a pose for an age without it becoming lifeless, imbuing a simple lift of an arm with drama.

Nothing else matches the *farruca* for intensity, and it casts a long shadow over the second half until, towards the end, Baras — a phoenix in red and gold — snakes and stamps in controlled outbursts, then grows playful with the musicians and the audience, both teasing her public and warming to them.

The ensemble dancers are impressive — technically disciplined and physically eloquent. The music, incorporating elements of jazz and folk, is perfectly orchestrated to the theatrical spectacle and canny in its use of simplicity and silence. *Sueños* is that

rare treat, a well-paced show with spirit and class. For once, those party-piece encores are thoroughly deserved.

Sanjey Roy

Until January 23. Box office:

Feb 3, 2004

FLAMENCO FESTIVAL REVIEWS

Dancing Without the Agony, But With More Experiments

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

There was none of flamenco dancing's agony, rooted in age-old laments, in the two Spanish companies that performed at the fourth annual Flamenco Festival New York over the weekend.

As usual City Center was packed, and as usual the festival confirmed that with some major exceptions, younger flamenco artists are less interested in their art form's hermetic essence than in creative experiments.

These can be mildly conventional as in the dance-dramas of Compañía Andaluza de Danza, a troupe of excellently schooled dancers that made its New York debut on Saturday and Sunday nights. There can also be a canny mix of tradition and pop style, as in Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras, which returned with a different format from last year's dance-drama, "Mariana Pineda."

On Friday night Ms. Baras offered a bare-bones approach in "Sueños (Dreams)," a suite of traditional dances for soloists and a small ensemble. Nonetheless, this concert presentation had a contemporary cool, down to the fashionable gowns and polished formality.

Ms. Baras, her hair dark and no longer

golden brown, saves the show from slickness by the sheer power of her dazzling technique and projection.

The opening "Maritete" turned a traditional cane dance into an Astaire-esque chorus with twirling canes, and a violin melody imposed over the guitarists, singers and percussionist lent a strange New Age tone.

All this is deliberate, a background for the skillfully dissolving patterns for five women and two men (including the long-haired standout Raúl Fernández), who make way for Ms. Baras's precise rhythms in her heel work, with its staccato attack in the solos, especially in her brilliant "Farruca." She is joined by José Serrano, who saves his energy for his solo, "Seguiriva."

In the finale the company offers a fleeting gloss on gypsy passion. All is beautiful and sharp angular form, with no curve in sight.

Compañía Andaluza de Danza was formed in 1994 by the Andalusian Regional Government. Its focus on dance-drama here recalled the National Ballet of Spain, where José Antonio Ruiz was a lead dancer before becoming the Andalusian troupe's current director.

In Ursula López, a statuesque dancer with impressive attack, the company has a



Jack Vurroegan for The New York Times

Sara Baras and her company perform "Sueños" in Flamenco Festival New York.

stunning dance actress. In the New York premiere of "La Leyenda," Mr. Ruiz's memorial tribute to the flamenco star Cármen Amaya, she is "the real woman" who crosses paths with an alter ego, "the immortal woman." The latter is subtly personified by Elena Aigado, who dances with lyrical, serpentine grace. The piece is too long, and the music has no dance pulse. But the theme of outer-success and inner torment gets some imaginative abstract treatment.

Ms. López's performance as the abandoned wife in Antonio Gades's familiar "Blood Wedding" was a revelation. When the Ballet Nacional de Cuba performed the work last fall, that role looked minor.

Flamenco dancers, not ballet dancers, can give the choreography its full value. Although the décor was absent, the overall performance was outstanding. Ana Moya was the bride who left her groom, Raúl Gomez, and his mother, Guadalupe Torres, for her lover, Miguel Angel Cortacho.

Living|Arts G7

Dance Review

Ballet Flamenco's mix of forms puts out the fire

By Thea Singer
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Flamenco came into being in the latter part of the 18th century in Andalucía, a region in southern Spain, not as a performing art but a way to express raw emotion. Anger, joy, fear — you name it — drove the performers who, spurred by song and sometimes guitar, would improvise within traditional forms that went by names like alegrías (which translates as “joy”) and soleares (“loneliness”), each of which was characterized by a particular rhythm and mood.

Now along comes Sara Baras with her Ballet Flamenco, a troupe of 11 dancers and 12 musicians, to stretch the boundaries of the genre by commingling traditional flamenco with essences of modern tap, contemporary dance, even ballet (these dancers actually spot when they turn) — and to codify

Flamenco Festival 2003

Presented by World Music
Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras
At: the Shubert Theatre, last night;
program repeats today.
Juana Amaya y Farruquito
perform tomorrow.

the amalgam in the bargain. The success of the effort — a stringently choreographed evening-length work called “Mariana Pineda” — was decidedly mixed last night.

Baras's dance, which is set to a thrumming original score by Manolo Sanlúcar, springs from Federico García Lorca's 1925 play of the same name. Pineda (played by Baras) was a revolutionary at the time of the Spanish monarchy of the 1830s who was ordered first to a convent for her activities and then hanged because she refused to release the name of her lo-

ver/co-conspirator to the authorities.

In Baras's hands (and especially her feet), the story concentrates almost exclusively on Pineda's relationships with three men: her young suitor, her mentor/true love, and her executioner (a spurned suitor).

Baras, with her sleek frame and slicked blonde hair, is a riveting performer. Her vibrant heel work could shatter bones, and her elongated arms topped by curling wrists look ready to snap. She's something of a siren, too, in her slinky white or black satin dresses. The strength of her technique reaches a peak in the final, hanging scene: A slender black tie around her neck connects her to the set's boxy grating, and as she spirals outward, she dances up a storm: Her heels shudder, her toes smack, her body and extremities reverberate with accelerating

cross-rhythms. The sequence embodies the kind of spontaneous combustion that begets the best flamenco.

And therein lies the core of what's wrong with so much of the rest of the dance. With choreographic configurations dominating the action — everything from bevvies of nuns in habits to soldiers in formation to mirroring steps that recall dreams — the raw emotions that give flamenco its heat get lost. Even the duets between Baras and the three main men often convey more shape than shiver. Having the orchestra onstage *above* the action creates a striking image. But it also prohibits the conversation between dancer and musicians that gives flamenco its spark. Too often, even in the duets, the performers dance to the music rather than use it as a tool to bring outside and into view what's roiling within them.

The Record

FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, 2003

Passion dance

Flamenco troupe a highlight at fest

By MELISSA MEISEL
SPECIAL TO THE RECORD

In preparation for the New York Flamenco Festival 2003 at City Center in Manhattan, which kicks off with a gala on Thursday, Sara Baras sounds suitably fired up.

And why shouldn't she be? She is, after all, the namesake of one of Spain's hottest dance troupes, is starting in a new work memorializing one of her homeland's most glorified female revolutionaries, and is putting her talent and that of her company in the spotlight at one of the dance world's most exciting venues.

"To dance in Manhattan with my own company is a dream come true; more amazing is to do it in City Center, which is like a temple for dancers," Baras said in an interview through an interpreter from Madrid, which she now calls home. "I have an enormous vision of putting my feet on the stage there. I hope my company and I will be worthy of such a prestigious place!"

If critics can be believed, they will: The 31-year-old brunette was hailed by Paris' daily newspaper, *Le Figaro*, as "the most sensational discovery on the women's scene — her dance is sculptural and magnificent, her footwork of a virtuosity rarely attained by a female flamenco dancer."

And, if she can be judged by the company she keeps: Baras has shared the stage with flamenco's leading luminaries, including Antonio Canales, Paco Peña, Javier Baron, El Guito, and Merche Esmeralda.

A native of Cadiz, Spain, Baras' journey in the arts began at age 8 in her mother's dance school. At 18, she won first prize in a television talent contest and joined the well-known Manuel Morao Company.

By 1999, Baras had established her own company, Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras, which has performed "Sensaciones," "Suenos," and "Juana La Loca (Vivir por Amor)" in venues across Europe and in Japan. She has won numerous awards for her choreography, as well as the 1999 Max award — Spain's most

WHAT: New York Flamenco Festival 2003.

WHEN: Opening gala, 8 p.m. Thursday. Through March 8.

WHERE: City Center, 145 W. 55th St., Manhattan. (212) 581-1212, www.worldmusicinstitute.org, www.flamencofestival.org.

HOW MUCH: Gala \$25 and \$150 (includes post-performance reception); other events \$45 to \$60.

prestigious theater honor — for best female dance performer.

Baras puts the appeal of her career simply.

"Flamenco is pure feeling," she said. "Flamenco is my life. And my passion is the dance. It's the way to express oneself completely."

As for her creativity, she said, "My inspiration comes from observations of the world around me. The most insignificant gesture can give me the next movement or the next piece of choreography."

Audiences will find those observations incorporated into "Mariana Pineda," a new work



DANCE 18

The New York Flamenco Festival 2003 is making a dream come true for Spain's Sara Baras.



Sara Baras: "Flamenco is my life. And my passion is the dance."

with music composed by Manolo Sanlúcar that she and her 22-member troupe will perform next Friday and Feb. 1. They are among more than 80 artists participating in the festival, which is dedicated to channeling the Gypsy roots of flamenco through performance, film, and workshops.

The work, based on Federico Garcia Lorca's 1925 play that became his first theatrical success, recently premiered at Seville's 12th Bienal de Flamenco. Baras will star as the Andalusian heroine who was killed during the reactionary regime of Ferdinand VII for refusing to betray her Liberal compatriots.

Dance

Sara Baras

Sadler's Wells, London

★★★★☆

24/10

Sueños is essentially a series of traditional flamenco numbers, adapted for the stage by Sara Baras. A consummate and professional dancer, Baras has also been a poster girl and a catwalk model — and it shows. Instead of gaudy souvenir-doll frills, her costumes are classy enough for cocktails. And she knows exactly how best to present her company, using simple but dramatic lighting, clear compositions and a varied programme of dance and music.

The opening martinete sees the company of nine dancers beating out a stark rhythmic tattoo with their canes. The following soleá glistens with funereal beauty. A phalanx of women stalk the stage, as dark and glossy as ravens, unfurling their shawls like ominous black wings. Baras and José Serrano dance the jaleo: a slow, courtly circling that gives way to strident clapping and a rattlingly brilliant finale. The farruca, traditionally a male preserve, makes a powerful centrepiece. In trousers and a bolero jacket, Baras commands the stage in a tense solo of inexorable builds and sudden freezes. It is not simply her prodigious technical skill that make this a star turn, she also has tremendous presence, holding a pose for an age without it becoming lifeless, imbuing a simple lift of an arm with drama.

Nothing else matches the farruca for intensity, and it casts a long shadow over the second half until, towards the end, Baras — a phoenix in red and gold — snakes and stamps in controlled outbursts, then grows playful with the musicians and the audience, both teasing her public and warming to them.

The ensemble dancers are impressive — technically disciplined and physically eloquent. The music, incorporating elements of jazz and folk, is perfectly orchestrated to the theatrical spectacle and canny in its use of simplicity and silence. Sueños is that

rare treat, a well-paced show with spirit and class. For once, those party-piece encores are thoroughly deserved.

Sanjoy Roy

Until January 23. Box office: 0870 737 7737.

The Times

SATURDAY JANUARY 22 2005

Dance

Sara Baras

Sadler's Wells, EC1

★★★★☆

DONALD HUTERA

SARA BARAS, choreographer, director and star of her own contemporary flamenco company, is a class act. This style-conscious Spaniard's show *Sueños* (Dreams), part of the Flamenco Festival London at Sadler's Wells, is immaculately staged.

The production values are obvious: an extremely sound-sensitive floor, artificial smoke billowing from the wings, sleekly gorgeous costumes and stark shafts of overhead light to shift our attention seamlessly between Baras's seven dancers and six musicians.

Baras's ensemble choreography favours symmetrical, unison formations, a multiplication of the machine-tooled dancing executed in her solos. Her attractive company pound out rhythms and strike sculptural shapes, but it is her talent they frame and her vision they embody.

With her erect carriage, arched back, trailing arms, twining wrists and footwork that is hugely subtle, exacting and varied, Baras is in total command of her art. Hitching up her skirt, in a burst of controlled fury she'll rattle out a thunderously fast tattoo. The coda to this womanly severity is a girlishly beaming smile.

Another solo, with Baras's lean curves slipped into a one-piece trouser suit, is breath-catchingly strong. She also duets with matadorial guest artist José Serrano. They dance like lovers, equals and icons, with mutual pride and formalised desire.

As impressive as *Sueños* is, I'm not sure how deep it goes. Baras's brand of designer flamenco is not soul-bruisingly wild but, rather, sharply calculated and with the rough edges cleanly sliced off. Hot? Very, but perhaps a slightly dry heat. Still, Baras and company connect. The opening night response was ecstatic.

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