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STAGE & ARTS

# 'Lorca's Women' are riveting in Zorongo Flamenco show at the Cowles

Review: Flamenco dancers present a gallery of the poet's female characters.

By CAROLINE PALMER Special to the Star Tribune | APRIL 19, 2016 — 8:59AM



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Zorongo Flamenco Dance Theater performing "Lorca's Women."

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Every once in a while you witness someone own a stage. It happened Friday night at the Cowles Center during a performance of Zorongo Flamenco Dance Theatre's "Lorca's Women." Guest artist Omayra Amaya, performing the solo she choreographed as Soledad Montoya from Federico García Lorca's poetry collection "Romance de la Pena Negra," riveted the audience, drawing out shouts of approval for her fiery performance.

Over the past 34 years Zorongo has shown a commitment to exploring the art, literature and history of Spain and other Latin countries through flamenco. "Lorca's Women" continues that tradition in celebrating the brilliant artist who was murdered in the Spanish Civil War for his sensual depictions, liberal politics and sexual orientation.

The entire show, dedicated to the female characters found in the poet/playwright's writings, evokes a spirit of virtuosic creativity. It begins even before the lights go out, with the dancers wandering the audience in character, sharing the narratives Lorca created for them.

Propelled by singers La Conja and Kina Mendez — whose voices bring pulsing life to Lorca's words — as well as accomplished flamenco guitarists José Vallé "Chuscales" and Roberto Castellon, the work is one of director/choreographer Susana di Palma's strongest to date.

Deborah Elias embodies the spinster Doña Rosita with a bittersweet longing, while Amanda Dlouhy gives the bride from "Blood Wedding" an air of dangerous confidence. And Andrea J. Frenzel as Yerma is most heartbreaking as she dances out her woe as a childless woman with "breasts of sand."

Other notable performances include La Conja's "Lola," featuring defiant dancing defined by her piercing stare. And Colette Illarde in her own choreography as La Argentina — Antonia Mercé, a friend of Lorca's who may have been a spy and mysteriously died a month before Lorca was killed — punctuates the evening with her own sense of revolution. Hers is a very different one than dictator Francisco Franco imagined, the vibrant one that Lorca, Mercé, and other artists of the time were living each day.



PROVIDED PHOTO

Zorongo Flamenco Dance Theater performing "Lorca's Women."

Throughout, di Palma drives the connections between stories, haunting the women and doling out the ultimate fate. It is her shouts of "Silencio" at the beginning and end of the show that draw our attention, but also captivating is her lifelong commitment to finding new ways to showcase flamenco as a mesmerizing form of creative expression.

Caroline Palmer is a Twin Cities dance writer.

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