
Havana Ballet Festival opens with piece inspired by Shakespeare

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A parade of students from the Cuban National Ballet School and dancers from the Cuban National Ballet (BNC) started the day in which Cuban ballerina Alicia Alonso, 94, took the stage at the Karl Marx theatre on Tuesday to greet the participants in an event bringing together soloists, choreographers and dance companies from almost 30 countries.

The piece "Shakespeare and his Masks" was interpreted on stage by the BNC whose director is Alonso, and who is also responsible for translating the most universal works of Shakespeare into the language of dance.

The iconic Cuban ballet company portrayed the drama of the lovers of Verona by combining festive scenes with the rivalry between the Montague and Capulet families, and also incorporated the character of a seller of masks of joy, sadness and death, who is the embodiment of Shakespeare.

This show begins with the celebration of the BNC's 66th anniversary and over the following ten days there will be other choreographies based on the Shakesperean tragedies "Hamlet", "Othello" and "The Tempest".

Dancers from the Cuban National Ballet performing a choreography inspired by William Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" during the opening ceremony of the 24th Ballet Festival of Havana at the Karl Marx theatre in Havana, October 28, 2014. EFE/Alejandro Ernesto

The program of the event includes a panoramic presentation of parts from classics like "Giselle", "Nutcracker" and "The Swan Lake" to contemporary representations like "Tango", "Ruby", "Sombbreroisimo", "Tacile" and "Rings", as part of international productions, many of them premiering in Cuba for the first time.

Stars of U.S. ballet companies like the American Ballet Theatre, Pontus Lidberg Dance, Ballet Hispanico of New York and those of Washington, Cincinnati and New York City, joined by dancers from Argentina's Colon Theatre, from Hong Kong, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, South Africa, Brazil, Chile, Italy, Puerto Rico and China.

Spanish dancers Ciro Tamayo, Carlos Pinillos, national ballet figures from Uruguay and Portugal and guests like the Ukrainian Ivan Putrov will also be present.

The festival also reserves space for a high level dance course offered by the BNC under the guidance of Alonso, and master classes and conferences on behalf of renowned dancers such as the Argentine Julio Bocca, Cuban Jose Manuel Carreño and Frenchman Cyril Atanasoff.

As part of its parallel activities the organizers have announced a workshop on technique, style and interpretative concepts of the Cuban ballet school, and several photographic exhibitions and displays of visual arts.
