

Queensland Performing Arts Centre and Queensland Events
in association with Brisbane Festival present

Ballet
Nacional
de Cuba



AUSTRALIAN PREMIERE OF
ALICIA ALONSO'S ACCLAIMED
PRODUCTION OF

DON
QUIXOTE

www.qpac.com.au

Thursday 15 April 2010

MEDIA RELEASE

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BALLET NACIONAL DE CUBA

Australian premiere of Alicia Alonso's acclaimed production of

DON QUIXOTE

Ballet in three acts • *Music by Ludwig Minkus* • *Choreography by Alicia Alonso*
with the collaboration of Marta Garcia and Maria Elena Llorente
after the original version by Marius Petipa and Alexandre Gorsky

Exclusive Australian Season
Queensland Performing Arts Centre, Lyric Theatre
24 September – 3 October 2010

"Thanks to Alonso Cubans have become stars around the world" UK Times Online 2010

"Ballet Nacional de Cuba – to die for" UK Express Online 2010

The international ballet sensation, the Ballet Nacional de Cuba (National Ballet of Cuba) will bring its exuberant and sensual style of classical ballet to Australia for an exclusive Brisbane season from 24 September to 3 October at Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC).

Ballet Nacional de Cuba will showcase their dazzling technique, passion and unique Latin exuberance in the Australian premiere of their fiery Cuban take on the great three-act classic *Don Quixote*.

Over the past decade, Ballet Nacional de Cuba has risen to the very front rank of international dance companies. Their touring schedule has included triumphant appearances in London, Washington, Paris, Beijing, Athens, New York and Tokyo – the company has toured in more than 58 countries, drawing from their vast repertory of both the classics and modern ballets.

The Ballet Nacional de Cuba presentation follows the sell out season by The Paris Opera Ballet in June last year, which was also an exclusive to Brisbane and a partnership between QPAC and the Queensland Government, through Queensland Events. The season will be presented in association with Brisbane Festival.



QPAC Chief Executive John Kotzas said that the visit by the extraordinary Ballet Nacional de Cuba was part of QPAC's commitment to presenting a program of unique national and international dance for Australian audiences.

"Australians love dance, both to watch and to participate. It is an incredibly accessible art form which can be appreciated by aficionados and novices alike and has the ability to evoke strong emotional responses.

"The countries regularly thought of as foremost in the world of classical dance are Russia, France and America. In recent years, Cuba has made its way to the world stage through the increasingly acclaimed Ballet Nacional de Cuba. Like Australians, Cubans love to dance. For an island of just 11 million people, they've produced a remarkable number of sensational dancers.

"For many years these amazing dancers could only be seen in Cuba, but over the past few years the company has travelled widely and with each tour its reputation has grown.

"Described as utterly distinctive, Cuba's national ballet company, while remaining culturally isolated, boasts world class dancers. The dancers combine a Russian-style classical training with Latin flair and are in demand the world over.

"*Don Quixote* is one of the most famous ballets in the world. It is the ballet for which this company is the most renowned and is a well-loved story of idealism, and the continual quest for chivalry. I am confident that Australian audiences are going to be blown away by the energy, talent, passion and sheer joy for dance that emanates from this company," said Kotzas.

"We are also pleased to extend a special price for dance schools and school groups to enable as many young people as possible to experience this dance company," he said.

Queensland Events CEO John O'Sullivan said "The Ballet Nacional de Cuba is a natural extension to the hugely successful partnership with QPAC that we established in 2009 in staging The Paris Opera Ballet.

"Queensland has great arts facilities and we are keen to further develop our interests in this area," said Mr O'Sullivan.

The Ballet Nacional de Cuba was founded in 1948 by Alicia Alonso. Prima Ballerina Assoluta and Artistic Director of the Company, Alonso is one of the most significant personalities in the history of dance and is the most celebrated figure in Latin American ballet.

Choreographed by Alonso, and based on the original by Marius Petipa, this Cuban version of *Don Quixote* has been acclaimed by worldwide critics and by the public, due to the serious and dignified treatment given to the title character.



“Brilliant dancers seem to be the norm in the Ballet Nacional de Cuba which regularly produces international stars”

New York Times 2003

“The Ballet Nacional de Cuba combines rigour with exuberant gusto: sharp footwork, soaring jumps, energy to burn”

UK The Independent 2010

TICKET PRICES

	ADULT	CONC
Premium	\$154	
A Reserve	\$124	\$94
B Reserve	\$94	\$74
C Reserve	\$74	\$44
D Reserve	\$44	

Special Dance Price* \$39

*Conditions Apply. No concessions available Friday and Saturday evenings. Prices include GST where applicable. A transaction fee may apply. Concession applies for Australian Pensioners, full-time students & 16 years and under with a valid ID.

PERFORMANCE TIMES

Friday	24 September	7.30pm
	GALA OPENING NIGHT	
Saturday	25 September	1.30pm
Saturday	25 September	7.30pm
Sunday	26 September	3.00pm
Wednesday	29 September	1.30pm
Wednesday	29 September	7.30pm
Thursday	30 September	7.30pm
Friday	1 October	7.30pm
Saturday	2 October	1.30pm
Saturday	2 October	7.30pm
Sunday	3 October	3.00pm

Tickets for Ballet Nacional de Cuba on sale Tuesday 27 April.

Bookings | www.qpac.com.au | 136 246

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Ballet Nacional de Cuba

THE NATIONAL BALLET OF CUBA

Now celebrating its 60th anniversary, the National Ballet of Cuba (Ballet Nacional de Cuba) was founded by the legendary Cuban-born *prima ballerina assoluta*, Alicia Alonso who continues as the company's artistic director today.

Alicia arrived in America at the age of just 15, and began her lifelong study of ballet. She worked with Balanchine, Zanfretta and Feodorova, and was the first westerner to dance at both the Kirov in Leningrad and the Bolshoi in Moscow. Although internationally acclaimed as one of ballet's greatest stars, Alonso chose to return to Cuba with a vision of shaping a company that combined the traditions and romanticism of classical ballet with the unique energy and exuberance of her Caribbean homeland.

"As a people, we Cubans were born to dance. Thanks to the mix of races, Spanish and African, both lovers of dance, Cuban dancers immediately stand out with their expressive way of performing both classic and modern works" says Alonso.

On her return to Havana in 1950 she established the company, Ballet Alicia Alonso and then an associated dance school. In 1960 Fidel Castro bestowed a substantial grant on Alicia's company, which was renamed the Ballet Nacional de Cuba (National Ballet of Cuba) and the world was treated to an entirely new style of dance which combined Latin, African and Russian influences.

With more than 600 productions in its repertoire and a history of touring that includes the Americas, Europe, Asia, Canada and Russia, the National Ballet of Cuba has achieved more than critical acclaim – it has established Cuba as a training ground for dancers noted for dazzling technique and ebullience.

The National Ballet of Cuba's version of *Don Quixote* has been acclaimed worldwide, not only for its Latin panache and explosive vigor but also for Alonso's joyous and sparkling take on Petipa's classic.

To this day, Alicia Alonso remains at the helm of the company. Now almost 90 and virtually blind, she remains a potent force at the National Ballet of Cuba and in Cuba itself. She has no plans to retire, and was recently quoted by London's Guardian newspaper "I'll still be running this company in 100 years time."



Don Quixote

The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote of La Mancha, better known simply as *Don Quixote*, is one of the world's greatest, most enduring and most popular works of fiction. Written by Miguel de Cervantes and first published in Spain in two parts in 1605 and 1607, it was an immediate success, its fame spreading far beyond Spain where it is still regarded not only as the most influential works to emerge during that country's Golden Age but also as a seminal work of modern Western literature.

Cervantes' creation of an idealistic, romantic though slightly dotty knight and his faithful servant, following a dream as they travel through a series of adventures, blends the comic and the tragic aspects of all human lives and has touched hearts and minds around the world for three centuries. It was perhaps inevitable that such a worldwide literary success would assume other forms and so it has, from film to musical to ballet.

The great choreographer Marius Petipa was quick to see it as the basis for a successful ballet. Creator of some fifty ballets including such enduring classics as *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Nutcracker*, *Paquita* and *La Bayadère*, he commissioned the composer Ludwig Minkus, his colleague at the Imperial Theatre in St Petersburg, to create the music for *Don Quixote* and the resulting work has become an integral part of the classical ballet repertory.

Don Quixote was first performed by the Ballet of the Imperial Bolshoi Theatre of Moscow, Russia on 26 December 1869. Continuing affection for the story also led to it being translated into the next popular medium, television. A non-musical teleplay *I, Don Quixote*, was screened in the United States in 1959. Within a few years the story was again adapted, this time as a musical called *Man of La Mancha*. In this incarnation it ran on Broadway for 2,328 performances, winning five Tony Awards. Its signature tune "To Dream the Impossible Dream" has become a musical standard. In 1972 the film version of *Man of La Mancha* starring Peter O'Toole and Sophia Loren appeared on cinema screens internationally and again audiences flocked to see the story of the peripatetic idealistic knight, for whom the word 'quixotic' was coined, pursue his 'impossible dream.'

In 1973 Australia became forever associated with *Don Quixote* when Rudolph Nureyev, Robert Helpmann and Lucette Aldous and The Australian Ballet starred in their version of the full ballet, filmed in a vast airport hangar near Essendon in Melbourne.

The Ballet Nacional de Cuba premiered its Spanish-flavoured version of this imperishable classic on July 6 1988 at the Gran Teatro de La Habana "Garcia Lorca".



Don Quixote Synopsis

ACT 1

In a Barcelona village square, a simple inn keeper's daughter, Kitri falls in love with an equally simple man Basilio, but the romance is cut short by Kitri's father Lorenzo, who would rather see her marry the rich, though dull, minor nobleman, Gamache.

The square then comes to life as the colourful bullfighters arrive, closely followed by Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. An ageing nobleman, Don Quixote is a romantic man, trapped in an unromantic life. He dreams of an exciting life; of romance, chivalry and danger. Don Quixote finds Kitri irresistible, and believes she may be Dulcinea, Quixote's perfect woman, the heroine of his many books. They dance together but still Kitri is obsessed with Basilio. Protecting the young lovers from Lorenzo's continued pressure to marry Gamache; he helps the couple escape into the countryside.

ACT II

Happy in the dark night and hidden from pursuit Kitri and Basilio think their troubles are over – but are soon approached by a group of gypsies set to rob them. Luckily the chieftain's daughter recognises Kitri and the attempted robbery turns instead into a celebration full of dance and merriment, with the company of the Don and Sancho. The party is ruined when Lorenzo and Gamache, accompanied by soldiers, break into the group. Don Quixote, eternally the chivalrous romantic, tries to protect the couple, and lunging about wildly with his lance strikes out at a windmill that he has taken to be a giant and is knocked to the ground.

While recovering from the fall, and perhaps only partly conscious, the Don lies in a nearby meadow, besieged by dreams of a garden visited by his Dulcinea and Cupid – and then filled with monsters which he battles, only to be awakened by his servant Sancho.

ACT III

Kitri and Gamache's forced marriage is unavoidable, and the village prepares for a wedding. Many guests arrive including Don Quixote, Sancho and the bullfighters. Soon we also notice a disguised stranger in the crowd. It is soon revealed to be Basilio, who, in a desperate attempt to win over his love Kitri, stabs himself. His dying wish is made to come true – he and Kitri must be married before he dies. Lorenzo agrees and a priest is found to bless the union. To everyone's surprise, Basilio then leaps to his feet – having fooled everyone! With Don Quixote's help Lorenzo and his daughter make amends and a wonderful wedding celebration ensues.

The ballet finishes with Don Quixote and Sancho Panza leaving to continue their quest for truth and justice.