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Irene Rodríguez: passion resemblance

05/02/2018



The first dancer, choreographer and artistic director says she admires classical dance, but what really moves her blood is the Spanish one.

When I called her to arrange a meeting, she scared me; her voice is as strong as her heels on the plank. Some had already told me about her professionalism and rigor, and I know the passion which she moves the swirl of her skirt with, but I would like to know what airs impel her movements on stage.

– What led you to be interested in dance?

“Since my childhood I felt a special taste for the arts. In the day-care center I not only danced, but sang as well. A bit more grown up, I studied piano and guitar. In fact, Pancho Amat gave me my first guitar. I always tell him that If I had been a guitarist, I would have a nice story to tell, because it is an honor to receive that instrument from the hands of a public figure like him.

“When I was 10 years old, my mother enrolled me in ballet classes, but I used to escape to the next-door room, that of the Spanish dance, which was what really moved my blood. I like ballet a lot and admire those who devote themselves to it, but my passion was and is different.

“One day the Spanish dance teacher told my mother: “You owe me three months of classes”.

“My mother replied to her that it must have been a mistake, because I was not in her classes. “That’s what you think”, she replied.

“Thus I started to officially attend her classes. Then, I studied at the Artistic Teaching Unit of the Spanish Ballet of Cuba, where I graduated as first dancer, choreographer and artistic director, and at the Higher Institute of Art (ISA by its Spanish acronym), where I graduated as an actress and took my Master’s Degree in “Theoretical Studies on dance”.

“In 2012, I decided to found my own company, with my style and my ways of doing flamenco, a bit closer to the contemporary thing. So, we have our first five years now”.

– What is more difficult: to dance or to teach?

“To me, none of the two. They are two processes that I enjoy very much. I can say that right now I am really Irene, I fulfill myself. The complex parts are the administrative matters, the strenuous meetings, the obstacles at the moment of making a production. Teaching and dancing is easy, because it’s what I like, what makes me vibrate”.

– What qualities should a dancer have to join your company?

“I had to hold auditions for the foundational process of the company, but at present I choose them from the school that I founded in parallel with the group and that is achieving very good results nationally and internationally.

“In April 2016, we won the Award for Choreographic Excellence at the Choreography Contest of the 22nd International Meeting of Ballet Teaching Academies, which is an honor because we were allowed to participate, although we are not part of the National Council of Art Schools, and ours is not a Classical Dance school. We competed along with countries of great world recognition in this field, such as United States, Dominican Republic, Italy, Mexico, and France.

“Every dancer of the company comes from this school and must be complete, able to perform a Spanish classic or a contemporary flamenco. He/she must be well-trained in the new trends of the international dance in order to be able to meld all that. He/she must have great musical and dance skills. In short: really virtuous. But the main thing is that he/she must be self-denying and dream of our own life project”.

– Discipline and sacrifice have been key words in your development. Have you

regretted having done something in the name of those premises?

“This career involves many sacrifices. People sometimes see the good thing: trips, fame, the fact that one enjoys what ones does; but I had to renounce many things, including my childhood. While my friends met to play, I used to go to my classes and return very tired after seven o'clock at night. At that time, I had to do my homeworks.

“As an adult, it also entails to take time away from the family, the couple, and the children. At times, it's 10:00 or 11:00 pm and I am still working in my office. When we have performances, they are complete weekends in the theater...

“Yes, I have made many renunciations, but I do not regret any, because they have given me the results I expected. I do not figure out a normal life, because this is normal to me”.

– Five years after having created your own project, how do you see the future of the company?

“I see many little girls, who look like little fleas, entering their professional and vocational workshops at six o'clock in the afternoon. I would like a very big school. I see a stage full of dancers, a very large company; I see passion and we see ourselves working hard and delivering our art to Cuba and the world”.

**Translated by Jorge Mesa Benjamin / Cubasi Translation Staff**

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