

Alicia Alonso, Cuba's Most Universal Artist, is 98 Years Old

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Havana, Dec 21 (PL) The world's most renowned Cuban artist, Alicia Alonso, celebrates her 98th birthday today while the company she directs is rehearsing one of her favorite classics, *The Swan Lake*, an inescapable work in her career.

Alonso dedicated her life to dance, first to form herself as a respectable dancer, then to form her own style, and then to perpetuate the ballet within Cuban culture, as an integral and inseparable part of it.

Alicia, together with the brothers Fernando and Alberto Alonso, founded the first professional ballet company in Cuba, 60 years ago, when this art was scarcely understood in Latin societies.

Despite the social, political and health contradictions she suffered, this woman's decision and courage made her persist in elevating her rank as a dancer.

She backed the social revolution in Cuba started in 1959, and rose above prejudices and bourgeois ideologies to spread her art to the people, the factories, the fields, a forest, a valley, any street.

She became famous in the dance world for her prodigious twists and the particular

way she appropriated the technique, she became the protagonist of legends.

Some still speak of the fifth Alonso to refer to a specific feet position, while old ballet enthusiasts especially love the times they saw her transform into Giselle and Carmen.

The 98-year-old artist remains active as a teacher, choreographer and director of the Cuban National Ballet and the Havana International Ballet Festival, involving the world's most renowned dancers.

Few calculate her love for animals, especially a great passion for dogs, and the extraordinary sense of humor which led her to play jokes on some of her partenaires on stage.

She made some paintings in her youth and loved blue and universal literature since she was a child.

Besides, she always rejects that humans inhabit this universe alone and tells among her yearnings that they could sit on the Malecon in Havana to take a break and enjoy a wave show, because fame prevents her from going unnoticed.

The group he still leads will revive the most popular ballet, Swan Lake, in January at the Havana Grand Theatre, which has added the name of the famous artist to its name since 2015.

The applause and ovations with which the Cuban public receives Alonso upon his arrival there or at any theater in the country, also raise a history hard to compare.

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