

Havana's Grand Theater reopens on January 1st, 2016

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The statement was made by Deputy Cuban Culture Minister, Julio Ballester, during a tour of restoration works along with ballet company director, Alicia Alonso.

Under capital renovation since 2013, restoration works are on its final stage and are set to be concluded at the end of December, the date when the Cuban National Ballet Company will return to its usual stage to celebrate the victory of the Cuban Revolution. In addition to the restoration and renovation of the building's facades, vestibules, boxes and sprung floor, the theater now has new furniture, curtains, air-conditioning, acoustics, stage technique, rehearsal studios for dancers and orchestras, recording studio and more than 20 dressing rooms and bathrooms.

The theater, which opened on April 15th, 1838, with the name of Tacón Theater to honor Captain General, Miguel Tacón, was at that time considered the largest and most luxurious in Latin America. It was sold by its first owner, Pancho Marty, to the Havana Lyceum Company, which later sold it to the Galician Center Society. The building was renovated and reopened in 1915. Throughout its long history it's been named Grand National Theater, Estrada Palma and García Lorca Theater. As of 1985, at the request of Alicia Alonso, the building was named Havana's Grand Theater and its main hall named García Lorca.

Since its establishment, the most important celebrities, ballet, opera and theater companies have performed in it, including ballerinas Fanny Elssler and Ana Pavlova; actresses Sara Bernhardt and Eleonora Duse; singers Enrico Caruso, Titta Rufo, Victoria de los Angeles and

Teresa Berganza; the Kirov Ballet and the 20th Century Ballet of Maurice Bejart; as well as great French mime Marcel Marceau.

Outstanding musicians have also played at Havana's Grand Theater, including Serguei Rachmaninov, Arthur Rubinstein and Daniel Barenboim; cellist Pablo Casals, violinist Jascha Heifetz and guitarist Andrés Segovia.

Edited by Damian Donestevez

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