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Viengsay Valdés: Expanding Ballet in Cuba, a Commitment of Fidel

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The first dancer from the National Ballet of Cuba (BNC), Viengsay Valdés, witnessed here the efforts of the Cuban Revolution's historic leader, Fidel Castro, to expand the dance in his country.

Our Fidel, the leader of whom all Cubans are proud was humanist, sincere, a motivator of masses, committed to his country, the artist described in exclusive statements to Prensa Latina.

Fidel understood that for the people to reason, to be intellectual, to be willing and committed, they also need to feel, to dream, to get emotional, and that is delivered by art, delivered by the culture that makes us human, she declared.

The renowned ballet dancer remembered how in 2002 the revolutionary leader was present at the inauguration of the 18th International Festival of Ballet of Havana, an event in which she danced the pas de deux of *The Privateer*, along with Carlos Acosta.

After that performance, Fidel decided that he wanted to see more, and the very next day, on October 29th, without prior announcement, he arrived at the National Theater with the purpose of witnessing the same pair of interpreters in the classic *Don Quixote*.

Always from the respect and the admiration we felt excited as artists to know about his presence and I tried to show me to the leader of Cuba who that night was a spectator, Valdés remembered.

According to the ballerina, at the end of the show she and Acosta were called to the Council of State, to Fidel's office.

Beyond the praise for our dance, we witnessed together with Ramona de Súa, Loipa Araújo and Abel Prieto, Fidel's commitment to massifying culture in Cuba, he said.

As the artist said, the historic leader wanted to find a way to summon children from all over the country who wanted and were able to study ballet, and discussed how to go neighborhood by neighborhood, with an organized bus system to facilitate the development of their vocation.

Thousands of students entered ballet elementary school because of that experience, and to offer the people all that, it is just any leader who does it, she added.

The ballerina, who is also Vice-president of the Cuba-Laos Friendship Association toured Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in August as part of the activities of the Cuban embassies in those nations for the 90th birthday of the historical leader of the Cuban Revolution.

Valdés participated in conversations about Fidel, acted in the three countries, then left for Moscow to fulfill the invitation to dance at the International Festival of Classic Ballet of the Kremlin, in Russia, and returned to this capital with the aim of preparing the Festival of Havana, which was recently concluded.

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