

Dance review: 'Forever Flamenco' at Ford Amphitheatre

4:37 PM, August 2, 2009

There was no dearth of *duende* -- soul -- at the Ford Amphitheatre on Saturday, when "Forever Flamenco: L.A. Olé!" took the chill off the night air. Produced by the Fountain Theatre's godmother of flamenco, Deborah Lawlor, the two and a half hour show sizzled with 10 singers, dancers and musicians.



Unlike Hollywood, which worships at the altar of youth, flamenco operates in a reverse ageism universe, revering maturity, as evidenced in Roberto Amaral. Exuding authority at 60, the gray-bearded Los Angeles treasure offered balletic turns, whole body quiverings and an astonishing exit whereby he moved backward on the sides of his feet in his solo, "A Mi Manera."

On the flip side is Timo Nuñez, 25. A local heartthrob who's strut his stuff on Fox's TV show "So You Think You Can Dance," the tall, reed-thin performer could star on a Versace catwalk. Preening and posing in black muscle T and tight leather pants, Nuñez then unleashed a series of one-legged turns and butt shimmys in "Sol y Sombra." Technically adroit, Nuñez relies too heavily on the smolder factor, and one looks forward to the day when depth trumps demeanor.



At 33, L.A.-based Briseyda Zarate scorched with her feline presence, a firestorm of filigreed fingers and fleet footwork in "Ecos de la Sierra." Connecting to the music -- especially the soulful wailings of L.A.'s Jesús Montoya, the no-nonsense Zarate also skittered as if possessed.

Luscious backbend characterize Fanny Ara's work. A Bay Area resident, she wowed with a series of gravity-defying moves in "La Andaluza." Responding to the stellar strummings of guitarists Ricardo Marlow and Antonio Triana (the former is East Coast-based, the latter lives here), Ara also assaulted the floor with a fine foot-stamping cadenza.

"La Genoveva" (Genevieve Guinn) did a slow burn in "La Carbonera," an excursion into hip swaying and arm flourishes, while "Encuentro," her duet with Nuñez (choreographed by Edwin Aparicio), was filled with precise unisons, including pouty posturings that resembled a Calvin Klein perfume ad.

Antonio Granjero proved unstoppable in two numbers, his final solo, "Duende," a stamina fest. Prodded by the irrepressible percussionist-singer Francisco Javier Orozco -- "El Yiyi," Granjero (like Orozco, from Spain) tore across the stage like a bullet train, his quicksilver feet faster than any hand, his hopping quarter turns a marvel, his bent-leg kicks nonchalantly tossed off.

Who needs 21st century technology when we've got the earth and fire of first-class flamenco?

-- Victoria Looseleaf