

A Palo Seco

flamenco company

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Rebeca Tomas
Artistic Director & Choreographer

Pedro Cortes
Musical Director

*"Awesomely fiery."
-New York Times*

Graphic Design - Damien Alvarez Photography - Malv Blomberg & Casey Mitchell

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ABOUT THE COMPANY

A Palo Seco is a New York based Flamenco Company that strives to develop a unique voice, employing their Flamenco expertise, while also taking into account the context in which they live. Their work aims to expose people to an innovative way of looking at Flamenco, combining traditional techniques with a modern, metropolitan flare. Run by artistic director and choreographer, Rebeca Tomas, the company debuted its first production in May 2010 at Theatre 80 St. Marks (New York City). The company has continued its yearly New York City season at Theatre 80 and has appeared throughout the U.S. at venues such as the 2012 Chicago Flamenco Festival and Jacob's Pillow Dance.

"A Palo Seco" is a phrase that refers to a bare-bones style of flamenco music, often consisting of singing or percussion alone. This stripped-down aesthetic has become a central theme in the company's work, characterizing its biggest departures from tradition, while also rooting their work in the emotional rawness that lies at the heart of the art of Flamenco.

"A Palo Seco' as a whole was truly a feast for the eyes and the ears."

(Lindsay Miller, Theater Online)

"Flamenco with Soulfulness and a Burst of Springtime." (Gia Kourlas, NYTimes)

"The artists in A Palo Seco: Rasgos Flamencos go far beyond showcasing their great musical and dance talent—they offer the experience of being transported by something deep and powerful stirring inside. It's a level of expression that can't be faked, and that no amount of technical perfection could replace. Melancholy, pride, and raw passion—expression we've become unaccustomed to seeing offered without apology—burst out in wailing song, heart-racing rhythm, and impossibly fast footwork. It's a performance that requires fearlessness, the rendering of body and spirit complete." (Megin Jimenez, NYTheatre.com)

"Tomás and her company know their flamenco, yet they're willing to play with its conventions."

(Jack Anderson, NYTheatre Wire)



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THE COMPANY: ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Rebeca Tomas

Artistic Director, Choreographer, Dancer

Rebeca has been deemed by the critics as “awesomely fiery” (*New York Times*), “masterful” (*Eva YaaAsentawaa*), and “a postcard image of the feminine Flamenco dancer” (*Kansas City Metropolis*). After years of performing and touring with such companies as *Soledad Barrio* and *Noche Flamenca* and *Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana*, she founded A Palo Seco Flamenco Company, for which she directs and choreographs her own original productions. Acknowledged as an up and coming voice in the U.S. Flamenco community for an artistic vision deeply rooted in Flamenco tradition, yet relevant in a modern urban context, her productions have been proclaimed as “a feast for the eyes and the ears” (Theatre Online).

In support of her artistic work, Tomas has received the LMCC MCAF grant (2011 & 2013) for her company productions, Jerome Foundation's Travel and Study Grant (2008 & 2010), a Space Grant at the 92Y Harkness Center for Dance, and first place at the XIII Concurso Nacional de Flamenco in Albuquerque, New Mexico (2010). In July 2012, her piece “*El Lenguaje del Abanico*” was featured by La Caixa Foundation/Vitra Design Museu in Barcelona. She is presently a 2013 fellow in Choreography from the New York Foundation for the Arts.

In addition to her work with *A Palo Seco*, Tomas works as a dancer, instructor, and choreographer throughout the country. Past projects include Lincoln Center's production of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, R.evolución Latina's Choreographer's Festival and presentation at the *Broadway Cares 25th Annual Easter Bonnet Competition*, and Yaron Zilberman's indie drama *A Late Quartet*. She recently served as choreographer and project director for Flamenco Vivo II's *Navidad Flamenca*.

Rebeca began her formal dance training in Granada, Spain at Maite Galán's Escuela de Danza Española. She later moved to Madrid, where she studied at the internationally renowned Flamenco Academy Amor de Dios.



“Compact, spring-loaded, and finely trained” (The New Yorker)

“a masterful flamenco dancer... Tomás holds nothing back... she's truly a well-crafted explosive device.” (Eva Yaa Asantewaa)

“This New York flamenco artist is both a devoted traditionalist and a restless experimenter. She respects the achievements of her art, yet is eager to stretch its boundaries.... Whether they are formally traditional or experimental, all of her dances may be fierce, for Ms. Tomás, though physically tiny, can be awesomely fiery.” (Jack Anderson, NYTimes)

“When she swept onto the stage for her alegrías solo... Ms. Tomás was like a burst of springtime. Wearing a flowing dress in pinks and purples and flicking her long ruffled train like a mermaid's tail, Ms. Tomás contrasted her winsome spirit with a more serious display of prickling footwork that rooted her into the floor with an earthy power.” (Gia Kourlas, NYTimes)

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THE COMPANY: MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Pedro Cortes, Musical Director & Guitar

Pedro Cortes is the third generation of a family of Spanish Gypsy guitarists. He uses the experience passed down to him by his family to maintain the purity of Flamenco while creating new and original compositions. He began his studies with his father, as well as the esteemed Flamenco guitarist Sabicas, and he began touring professionally at the age of 17. He premiered his work *En La Oscuridad de las Minas* at the Teatro Albeniz in Madrid, and in 1992 he had works premiered by Carlota Santana's Flamenco Vivo Dance Company at the Joyce Theater in New York. He was commissioned by Zorongo Flamenco to write a score for a dance drama called "Garden of Names," which was inspired by the novel of Lawrence Thornton's called *Imagining Argentina*. He also wrote music for a children's program on HBO called "Fairy Tale for Every Child."



Mr. Cortes has toured with Jose Greco and Maria Benitez, and has performed with such artists as Farruquita, La Tati, Merche Esmeralda, Manolete and the late Lola Flores. He has been guest artist with the St. Louis Opera and the New York Grand Opera, and served as Musical Director with the Guthrie Theater in Garcia Lorca's *Bodas de Sangre*. Mr. Cortes is artistic director of his own Flamenco Fusion group, Amanecer Flamenco De Hoy, and also Musical Director of Mimbres Y Vareta, and Zorongo Flamenco. He has written two books on Flamenco, *El Dron del Faraon* and *Cruzando el Charco*, published by the American Institute of Guitar.

"Dazzlingly deployed virtuosity paced like capriciously gathering storm..." Jennifer Fisher, Los Angeles Times

FOR A FULL LIST OF COMPANY MEMBERS AND THEIR BIOS, PLEASE REFER TO THE COMPANY WEBSITE:

www.apalosecoflamenco.com

"It's hard to choose one artist to single out, as their performances are closely entwined and they are all, simply, so good." Megin Jimenez, NYTheatre Wire

"The dancers convey a sense of spontaneous expression, sparks of fire, while remaining in full control over the complicated syncopation." Megin Jimenez, NYTheatre Wire

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VIDEO LINKS

COMPANY PROMO (3-min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rk3V5nSY-OU>

COMPANY PROMO (1-min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwoLixxEReQ>

EL MARTINETE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nyF3XTNcG4Y>

Noted for its emotional rawness and power, the *Martinete* is performed by three female dancers taking on the strength and stature of the masculine dance style, donned in high waist pants, jackets, and vests.

ALEGRÍAS CON BATA DE COLA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHET2pC9BUQ>

A traditional and upbeat solo, this Alegrías solo is performed with the typically feminine *bata de cola* (long-train dress) and *mantón* (shawl). This video features many of the musicians who will appear in “A Palo Seco: Temporal.”

EL LENGUAJE DEL ABANICO

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X60U0jIwsQw>

The *abanico* (Spanish fan) takes on the unconventional role of a percussive instrument and a sharp visual punctuation in an original work that, structurally, departs from all structural norms within a traditional Flamenco piece. This solo features choreography that juxtaposes the traditionally female *abanico* against masculine lines, positions, and turns.

LAS FARRUCAS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RRUlowvjC4>

A typically masculine-style of Flamenco dance, this duet capitalizes on the linear nature of the male dance, yet makes the feminine power explicit.

photo by Lee Wexler/ ImagesForInnovation.org

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Upcoming Productions & Recent Performance History



2017

ARTS ED in CT:
Fri 1/6- Ashford, CT
Mon-Wed 1/9-1/11- Simsbury, CT

2016

Eastman School of Music:
“World Music Series” (Rochester, NY)
Multicultural Arts Center (Cambridge, MA)
Wesleyan University (Middletown, CT)

2015

Multicultural Arts Center (Cambridge, MA)
Red Hook Festival (NYC)
Between the Seas Festival (NYC)
Hobart & William Smith Colleges (Geneva, NY)
University of Rochester (Rochester, NY)

2014

Central Park Summer Stage (NYC)
Le Poisson Rouge (NYC)
Jacob’s Pillow Dance (Beckett, MA)
Multicultural Arts Center (Cambridge, MA)
University of Rochester (Rochester, NY)

2013

NYC Season @ Theatre 80 (NYC)
Jacob’s Pillow Dance (Beckett, MA)
Between the Seas Festival (NYC)
University of Rochester (Rochester, NY)

2012

Le Poisson Rouge (NYC)
Chicago Flamenco Festival: *Instituto Cervantes*/
Old Town School of Folk Music (Chicago, IL)
Jacob’s Pillow Dance (Beckett, MA)

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Touring & Repertoire

Program Option A: *Rasgos Flamencos*

With an eye on both convention and innovation, this production explores the juxtaposition of the raw emotional darkness and the festive playfulness, both essential to the art of Flamenco. The "*Rasgos Flamencos*," or defining characteristics of the art form, are present in both traditional repertoire and in pieces with a more contemporary and individual take on the Spanish art.

Repertoire includes:

Conversaciones: An original composition that capitalizes on the interplay between dancers' spontaneity and features a rhythmic call-and-response between castanets, a rhythmic cane, and a Spanish fan,

El Lenguaje del Abanico: The abanico (Spanish fan) is implemented in an original work that departs from all of Flamenco's structural norms. The abanico takes on the role of a percussive instrument and a sharp visual punctuation.

Martinete: Often referred to as *cante jondo*, "deep song," the Martinete is sung and danced *a palo seco*, a capella with rhythm only and no guitar.

Farruca: A typically male dance due to its characteristic linear quality and footwork. In this case, the females "wear the pants."

Soleá: A somber and serious style of Flamenco, the *Soleá* is also considered *cante jondo*.

Alegrías: Lively and upbeat, *Alegrías* are typical of the port city Cádiz in southern Spain. Here they are performed with the traditional *bata de cola* (long train dress).

Program Option B: *Al Tablao*

This production features Flamenco in its most traditional format: *el tablao*. Ideal for non-traditional theater venues with more of a cabaret-style feel, this production features some of the company's most critically acclaimed group numbers, as well as traditional dance solos and musical numbers.

Repertoire includes:

Bulerías "A Palo Seco": A festive and improvisatory style within Flamenco in which people sing and dance spontaneously.

Sevillanas: A folkloric style of music and dance typical of Southern Spain and often performed with castanets.

Tangos: An upbeat style within Flamenco characterized by short *letras*, or song lyrics, which are interpreted interchangeably between dancers.

Guajiras: A coquettish piece typical of Flamenco's *ida y vuelta* styles, which contain influences from Latin America and, specifically, Cuba.

Soleá: (See above)

Alegrías: (See above)



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Academic & University programming ~ Arts Education

** NOTE: The following programs can be carried out independently, or in conjunction with another program and/or one of the abovementioned performance packages.*



Lecture Demonstrations:

(tailored to audiences of all ages)
The Lecture Demonstration is an interactive way of combining a straightforward Performance, hands-on workshop, and informative explanation about the art, culture and history of Flamenco. In between lively performance numbers full of rhythms and emotions, audience members get hands-on experience with playing las castañuelas (castanets), and las palmas (rhythmic hand-clapping), and they even learn to dance a bit of Flamenco themselves!

Workshops & Residencies:

(tailored to any age and/or skill level)
Individual or extended residencies focus on the essentials of Flamenco dance, including body and hand positions, zapateo (footwork), and palmas (rhythmic hand-clapping). Working with a variety of beats and rhythms, workshop students will learn how each element plays a part within the structure of a solo Flamenco dance. Depending on age, skill level, and number of sessions, participants will learn choreography to recorded music that they will later be able to practice and perform on their own. Extended sessions also focus on the history and culture of Flamenco and Spain.



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PRESS

"A Palo Seco' as a whole was truly a feast for the eyes and the ears." (Lindsay Miller, Theater Online)

"Choreographer and artistic director Rebeca Tomás takes advantage of the whole stage. Her compositions highlight the silhouettes of the dancers, offering a spectacle from any seat." (Megin Jimenez, NYTheatre.com)

"In 'Martinete,' Ms. Tomás showed her choreographic exactitude as the three women, their feet on fire, drifted in and out of unison and canon." (Gia Kourlas, NYTimes)

"This New York flamenco artist is both a devoted traditionalist and a restless experimenter. She respects the achievements of her art, yet is eager to stretch its boundaries.... Whether they are formally traditional or experimental, all of her dances may be fierce, for Ms. Tomás, though physically tiny, can be awesomely fiery." (Jack Anderson, NYTimes)

"Ms. Tomás brandished a Spanish fan, but wielded it like a butterfly knife, lunging from side to side in profile... The stage was alive with sounds: dragging her toe on the floor or tapping the fan onto her chest, she generated her own percussive score." (Gia Kourlas, NYTimes)

"The artists in A Palo Seco: Rasgos Flamencos go far beyond showcasing their great musical and dance talent—they offer the experience of being transported by something deep and powerful stirring inside. It's a level of expression that can't be faked, and that no amount of technical perfection could replace. Melancholy, pride, and raw passion—expression we've become unaccustomed to seeing offered without apology—burst out in wailing song, heart-racing rhythm, and impossibly fast footwork. It's a performance that requires fearlessness, the rendering of body and spirit complete." (Megin Jimenez, NYTheatre.com)

"Tomás and her company know their flamenco, yet they're willing to play with its conventions." (Jack Anderson, NYTheatre Wire)

"The energy of the performers in this showcase of flamenco dancing and music was infectious." (Lindsay Miller, Theatre Online)

"When she swept onto the stage for her alegrías solo... Ms. Tomás was like a burst of springtime. Wearing a flowing dress in pinks and purples and flicking her long ruffled train like a mermaid's tail, Ms. Tomás contrasted her winsome spirit with a more serious display of prickling footwork that rooted her into the floor with an earthy power." (Gia Kourlas, NYTimes)

"...a masterful flamenco dancer... Tomás holds nothing back...she's truly a well-crafted explosive device." (Eva Yaa Asantewaa, Infinite Body)

"Tomás is seeking to develop flamenco in new ways." (Jack Anderson, New York Theatre Wire)

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ABOUT FLAMENCO

A BRIEF HISTORY

A style of music and dance, as well as a culture in and of itself, Flamenco originated in the southern region of Spain (Andalusia), and took shape as a public art form during the mid-eighteenth century. Born as a result of the unique mixture of cultures and religions that co-existed in Andalusia throughout the centuries, some of Flamenco's most significant contributors include Sephardic Jews, Southern Spanish Christians, North African Arabs and Muslims, and Gypsies who originated in India and settled in southern Spain in the 15th century. Upon their arrival, the Gypsies encountered the Andalusian folk repertoire of music and dances, which they adopted quickly and to which they added their own distinctive touch (hand-movements, footwork, and complex rhythms). Over the years, these songs and dances continued to evolve, and developed from folklore into what we now refer to as Flamenco. Today, Flamenco continues to mature as an art form and has taken root in many countries around the world, transforming from a traditional Spanish art into a global phenomenon.

WROUGHT WITH EMOTION

Many of the song lyrics and styles within Flamenco were created in an atmosphere of extreme suffering and hardship. From poverty and marginalization, to brutality and expulsion, much of Flamenco is the expression of deep grief and anger, epitomized by styles such as *Cante Jondo*, or Deep Song. The Gypsies, however, also knew how to enjoy themselves and juxtapose their grief against joy and celebration. Styles such as the *Alegrías* or *Bulerías* have a bright and often playful feel to them.

LIVE MUSICIANS

While Flamenco is typically identified by dancers wearing long ruffled dresses, rhythmic footwork, and twirling hands, the Song and Guitar actually predate the dance. Live musicians are central and essential to every Flamenco performance, and it is only through the interaction that occurs between dancer and musicians that the improvisatory

nature and spontaneous emotional expression so central to Flamenco can occur. Instruments most typically seen at a Flamenco show consist of guitar, vocals, percussion (*palmas*- rhythmic hand-clapping, and *cajon*- a wooden box/drum). As Flamenco has evolved, however, many other instruments have been added to the mix, including cello, violin, bass, flute, saxophone, piano, and more.

Company Photographs by: Niko Alexandrou, Maly Blomberg, Amor Montes de Oca, Casey Mitchell, Lee Wexler, and Yi-Lin Hong.

