

FARRUQUITO OFFERS FIERY FLAMENCO IN 'IMPROVISAO'

By: Karen Campbell
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World Music/CRASHarts opened the dance portion of its Flamenco Festival 2016 Sunday night with the Boston premiere of "Improvisao" by Farruquito, a leading exponent of "puro" Gypsy flamenco. Quite simply, it was one of the most exciting flamenco shows in recent memory.

Part of the legendary Farruco dynasty, Farruquito (Juan Manuel Fernández Montoya) is committed to the preservation of a distinctive tradition, so there was no grand concept or fancy sets and few costumes changes, just a series of traditional dances and musical interludes. However, this was no dry, buttoned-up affair. As the title implies, this was flamenco that seemed improvised in the moment — raw, visceral, and executed with blazing intensity and immediacy.

With his long tresses, smoldering good looks, and charismatic presence, the 33-year-old Farruquito is a commanding figure just walking onstage. Add to that his technical prowess, dramatic flair, and brilliant sense of invention, and you have a superstar in the flamenco world. He has the chops as well as the bravado to take phrases right to the edge — into the air, onto his knees, riskily off-balance, arms angled, torso coiled. His explosive, muscular style sends high kicks and heavy stomps thundering into volleys of syncopated footwork. But with dazzling shifts in dynamics, he gently slides and skitters, tracing graceful arcs across the stage, unspooling blistering turns with a sense of breathtaking spontaneity. Grand flourishes slice the air. Shoulder shrugs suggest flirtation. And claps, slaps, and finger snaps add to the rhythmic texture. Yet he never loses his connection to the internal rhythms that drive each dance. It all looks totally organic, nothing pasted on for show, not even the radiant smile that burst through during the playful "Alegrías."

Farruquito has an engaging counterpart in dancer Gema Moneo. Her quicksilver footwork ranges from delicate whispers to pounding onslaughts, complemented by a pliable upper body, liquid arms, and a head that dips, swivels, and whips like a wild animal.

A large part of the charm of "Improvisao" is the integration of the dancers and musicians. Farruquito's ensemble includes guitarists Román Vicenti, José Gálvez, percussionist El Polito, and singers Antonio Zúñiga, Encarna Anillo, Mari Vizarraga, and Pepe de Pura. This was collaboration at its finest, each piece a dialogue of rhythms, tones, and emotional intent. The finale highlighted just how entwined flamenco music and dance can be. As the dancers joined the palmas, the musicians took turns with fleet footwork until they all danced jauntily off into the wings.

Source: <https://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/theater-art/2016/03/08/farruquito-offers-fiery-flamenco-improvisao/emRhGwJ44rs2Q1Sn3tj2xJ/story.html>