

Eva Yerbabuena/Farruquito – review

By Sanjoy Roy / March 18, 2013

The 10th Sadler's Wells Flamenco festival opened with evenings by two utterly different festival favourites: [Eva Yerbabuena](#) and [Farruquito](#). Yerbabuena is known for exploring flamenco as theatre: dramatising stories, creating group choreography and mixing dance styles. Her new work, ¡Ay!, sees her return to a more traditional format – a series of plotless, solo set pieces, with live music accompaniment – but she's also taken a real step forward.

In the cinematic opening, a spotlight glows and fades; Yerbabuena crosses and recrosses it like a ghost. When she begins to dance, her actions are stark and simple – shaking hands, slashing arms – and her musician is no flamenco guitarist or guttural vocalist, but symphony orchestra violinist Vladimir Dmitrienco, who draws harsh, almost atonal sounds from his strings. It's a startling scene, yet Yerbabuena makes it feel like the very essence of flamenco, because she treats the music as a [cante jondo](#) (often translated as "deep song"), seeming to draw the sound directly into her soul.

That sense of sound and spirit merging also pervades the next scene, set around a distorted, outsized chair. Yerbabuena tilts her body to its skewed angles while a percussionist rattles the rails as if they were bones. Elsewhere, Yerbabuena dances in more conventional style, backed by an excellent ensemble of guitarists, drummers and singers. She shows herself as a terrific flamenco performer, her form and footwork both precise and nuanced; but it is the sparser, more experimental sections that reveal her artistic vision.

Where Yerbabuena draws us into her private world, Farruquito's Abolengo is an extrovert affair that plays to its audience. The title ("ancestry") refers to two flamenco dynasties: Farruquito's own (the famous [Farruco](#) family) and that of his dance partner, [Karime Amaya](#), a descendant of the legendary [Carmen Amaya](#). The two begin as matched rivals, spiralling each other in perfect symmetry, competing with shotgun footwork, tossed heads and dramatic flourishes. Later, Amaya comes into her own in a solo *zambra*, a real tour de force; Farruquito stands out with his final *soleà*, a series of crescendos that emphasise the nuance and shading that have elsewhere been missing in their attempts to project to the audience. There's no doubting the dancers' skill, but it's revealing that they look most relaxed in the captivating encore, when the "show" itself is over.

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