

# Festival Flamenco Internacional

By [Journal Staff](#) on Mon, Apr 6, 2009

While the Festival Flamenco Internacional has been put on hold this year, to hopefully return in 2010, Joaquin Encinias's brilliant Yjastros American Flamenco Repertory Company filled the gap Saturday evening and refreshed the appetites of its fans. The National Hispanic Cultural Center's Journal Theatre was packed. The featured dance of the evening was "Jaleo de Jerez," created in the Escuela Bolera, a classical Spanish style popular in the 18th and 19th centuries. This rendition of the Jaleo was restaged by Encinias to musical accompaniment by Tomas Damas, and arranged by John Truitt. Two mandolins, a bass viol, and two guitars performed the piece in 3/8 time as the six dancers entered playing their castanets to accompany their foot patterns.

Wearing soft ballet slippers with a low heel, the dancers moved in three-count balancés, with delicate kicks and flips of the foot to accentuate a swirl of skirts. The style relates to the classical ballet of the time in France and Italy, but with characteristic Iberian postures and gestures of arms and hands. Seeing one of the historic roots of flamenco, performed in an elegant and accurate style, was a satisfying contrast to the rest of the evening's modern flamenco program.

The rather military "Zapateado," choreographed by Roberto Lorca for Eva Encinias, featured four female dancers in long trousers and tight vests creating their own unaccompanied rhythms. Poles hit the stage floor, the dancers' foot patterns adding decorative side rhythms, and then palmas. Intriguing changes in speed and volume heightened the percussive excitement.

"Paso a Dos por Cuatro," signifying dramatic and passionate pas de deux with four men and four women, brought the program to an enormous climactic peak. It actually succeeded in speeding up the audience's collective heartbeat in a dynamic and emotional love story, complete with conflict, support, and playful seduction. Four chairs centered each pair of lovers, sometimes used as bait to challenge one another, and advancing or retreating as though teasing a bull. Each pair created great chemistry, the men sometimes stalking, at other times falling at their lovers' feet, their heads resting on the women's thighs where they

sat.

The opening “Nuestro Aire” succeeded once again in presenting the high energy and fast moving pattern changes of Joaquin Encinias’s exciting choreography for the entire company of dancers. Gretchen Williams followed with “Alegrías,” revealing herself as a well-modulated soloist who transitioned nicely from slow turns in place, fingers and arms creating filigrees above her head, to ferocious stamps and speedy foot patterns beneath the ruffled skirt of a fabulous costume. Marisol Encinias danced a second “Alegrías” in a long, bata de cola skirt. She whipped the trailing tail in circles around her feet as though attacking an enemy presence. This was a sexier, angrier solo with strong hip accents, and Marisol’s clear and intricate footwork dominating.

“Solea por Bulerías” demonstrated once again Joaquin Encinias as a remarkable soloist of this somber style of flamenco. His rhythmic precision and emotional projection worked in close communion with singer Vicente Griego’s cante and Hector Aguilar’s work on the cajon. Encinias worked his rhythms out with a strong emphasis on syncopated patterns, and when he struck fast, four beats to each count with his feet, it was like gunshots to the floor. His moves seemed like an attack on an invisible foe.

