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Viva Espaa! Or How to Survive the Dark Days of December

By Olivia Bagnall

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Moscow fans and flamenco dancers can enjoy a celebration of Spanish dance this weekend.

This weekend the passion, emotion and artistic flare of Spanish culture comes to Moscow at the 14th International Festival of Flamenco dancing, called ¡Viva España!

"The festival celebrates all things Spanish, with an emphasis on the protection, preservation and development of flamenco dancing as a global art form," said Anastasia Kiryushinka, the general director of the Flamenqueria Center in Moscow. The organizers hope to unite the flamenco enthusiasts of Russia with anyone who has an interest in the culture of Spain, loves travelling or simply wants to escape the Russian winter for a few days.

During the festival, which runs from Saturday until Thursday, spectators can see performances from the best of Russian and Spanish flamenco musicians and dancers, as well as attend photography exhibits, master classes, competitions, and traditional flamenco parties.

¡Viva España! opens on Saturday, which has been declared the official Day of Spain in Russia. On this day anyone can attend free of charge the final round of the Golden Kentauride competition at the Flamenqueria Center. This competition, starting at 7 p.m., showcases the best of what Russians have to offer to the tradition of flamenco music and dance. Entry is free.

If you are more of a doer than a spectator, come down earlier in the day to take a master class for professionals and beginners, or see the Art of Flamenco photography exhibit.

The key event on the festival calendar is the evening performance of the piece "Hijas del Alba" from acclaimed Spanish director Javier Latorre, which will see the participation of both Spanish and Russian dancers for the first time.

Latorre choreographed the piece in 1989 and one year later won three national awards at the "Concurso Nacional de Arte Flamenco." Latorre's creation is a modern dance adaptation of "The House of Bernarda Alba," a harrowing play from Spanish dramatist Federico Garcia Lorca that depicts the relationship between a dominant mother and her four daughters during a period of mourning in their remote Andalusian home. The piece explores the dark and powerful emotions of loss and jealousy along with themes of repression, passion, and conformity. The performance will be showcased on Monday on the stage of the Estrada Theater.

The festival is organized by the Flamenqueria Center with support from the Russian Ministry of Culture and the Spanish Embassy in Russia. The center is based in Seville but has a branch in Moscow, and both are working to globalize the art of flamenco dancing and promote it as a modern art form through teaching classes and organizing international festivals such as ¡Viva España! The Flamenqueria Center even offers visa support to Russians who wish to continue or simply begin the study of flamenco dancing in Seville.

Just as the festival opens with a bang, the concert program will also close spectacularly when the Estrada Theater hosts the dramatic "Puntal" by choreographer David Perez.

For more information about the festival program, venues and ticket purchase, see fiestaflamenco.ru*.*

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