

'LOS NACIMIENTOS'

'*Los Nacimientos*' is a new, interdisciplinary dance/theatre piece created by **Tom Randle** in collaboration with **dotdotdot dance**. The piece began its life as a setting of some of the most evocative and sensuous texts of the Nobel prize-winning, Chilean revolutionary poet Pablo Neruda, and has been performed on numerous occasions both in the UK and abroad by Canadian-British soprano **Gillian Keith** and pianist **John Reid**.

When I first encountered the poems of Neruda, I was struck not only by the sheer beauty of the words, but also by their immense strength and vitality. While it is clear that Neruda's more politicised verses were capable of uniting a nation, his more intimate, romantic poems are every bit as powerful. Another aspect of his poetry is the fact that they are, in themselves, so very musical. The lightness and lyricism of his words made it a joy to set to music.

Following its initial success, it was after seeing a performance by dotdotdot dance at the Buxton Fringe festival that the idea was hatched to combine these elements - 21st century Art Song and flamenco infused choreography. The result is '*Los Nacimientos*' (*The Births*), its title borrowed from another of Neruda's poems.

Through the course of this collaboration the work has been expanded to include new songs and four piano interludes, called '*Capítulos*' ('*Chapters*'), which are interspersed among the sung poems. These pieces are loosely structured around existing dance forms, (for example the tarantella), while others incorporate echoes and motifs from the songs themselves. While they function as links between the poems, they are also incredibly potent dance movements in their own right. As Neruda's words are so full of fantastic imagery, many of which focus on the elemental, the immensely powerful and imaginative choreography compliments an equally dynamic musical performance.

The Songs

The gateway to the piece is the energetic and expansive song '*Nace*' where the singer confidently declaims to all the world, 'Yo aquí' - 'I am here'.

'*Planeta*', based on the opening six note motif of '*Nace*', is the polar opposite in character. The mood is quiet and introspective and the text questions the nature of the elements as the voice soars into the stratosphere.

In '*Serenata*' the piano imitates the strumming of a guitar being gently played on a moonlit summer's evening. The alternation between triple and duple rhythm gives an improvisatory feel to the song.

'*La Primavera*' is a cheerful, energetic ode to spring, as the singer greets its arrival, replete with new growth and the trilling of birds to herald the new season.

'*Mañana*' sees Neruda at his sensuous, intimate best as he compares a lover's naked body to a golden church in summer, an apple orchard, a slender grain of wheat, and a night in Cuba.

'*La Noche en Isla Negra*' is a terrifying depiction of the intensity and violence of the pounding surf at his beach house in Isla Negra. The tumult of the crashing waves can be heard in the rapid keyboard passages as the voice rises to a thrilling climax. This violence eventually gives way to the calm of the breaking dawn.

As the title suggests, '*Summario*' sees the poet taking stock of his life through what he has accumulated. Through his labours, his loves, his friendships and painful losses, he emerges with renewed hope for the future.