



TRADITIONAL DANCE IN URBAN CONTEXTS: Theatres as a Centre for Cultural Transmission

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ABSTRACT

The promotion of artistic expressions is a central function of theatres in urban settings, and one such expression is dance. Its performance contributes to the continuity and transmission of cultural heritage, particularly in the case of traditional or folk dance. The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, as reaffirmed in 2023, includes the Performing Arts among its areas of protection, and the IDC/UNESCO advocates for the preservation of dance as intangible cultural heritage. This article presents the findings of a study on the presence and status of traditional dance within the theatrical landscape of Madrid, Spain. Employing a mixed-methods approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative analyses, the research identifies a marked disaffection that hinders the safeguarding of this aspect of Spanish cultural identity. The sense of belonging and group identification is shown to enhance the value of this artistic and cultural practice, thereby fostering social cohesion.

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1. Introduction

Traditional dance has long played a fundamental role in cultural life. Although it may seem somewhat outdated in contemporary contexts, traditional dance has continued to endure in urban settings, largely through its presence in artistic venues, particularly in theatres, often referred to as “Temples of Art”. These venues have historically served as springboards for the transmission of culture, including dance.

Despite the richness and diversity of this distinct Spanish cultural expression, traditional dance may be at risk of disappearing if not actively supported. In response to such concerns, the UNESCO resolution on the safeguarding of traditional and popular culture states that “the population should be made aware of the importance of traditional and popular culture as an element of cultural identity” (UNESCO, 1989, p. 250). This resolution highlights the need to recognise the value of these forms and to take measures to ensure their conservation. To this end, the widespread transmission of traditional dance, through mass media and other public platforms, is essential. Theatre, in this context, may be considered one such medium.

Theatres have long served as gathering and recreational spaces for citizens. The Greeks, credited with creating the first purpose-built enclosures for performances, placed great importance on them, situating theatres in prominent areas of their cities. These venues functioned not only as places of entertainment but also as meeting spaces akin to agoras, where political assemblies were held (Pardal Padín, 2020). From this distant era to the present day, these sanctuaries dedicated to Dionysus, Terpsichore, and Apollo have played a significant role within societies, fostering a unique connection between artists and spectators, one that may provide a necessary respite from the stresses of metropolitan life.

Although there are temporal exceptions, for instance during the medieval period, historical documents attest to theatrical performances taking place in religious settings such as cathedrals, as well as in public squares. These events brought to life the autos sacramentales, and similar spectacles could be observed in liturgical celebrations, medieval sermons, or outside the church at court. One notable example of courtly theatre was the *momo*, which, according to the definition of the RAE, comprises figures and gestures performed for amusement in games and *mojigangas*. This spectacle is believed to have been celebrated in fifteenth-century Castile, with the entire court participating, including the King. The performances typically concluded with dances and balls, which, together with music and masks, were essential elements of the event (Pérez Priego, 2001).

Madrid, along with other Spanish cities, has witnessed the significant and fascinating evolution of theatrical spaces, which can be divided into three distinct periods. The first spans from the 16th century until the 1560s, during which performances lacked a permanent venue. The second period, from 1560 to 1620, saw the construction of the Corral de la Pacheca, the first of its kind in Madrid, located on Calle del Príncipe and inaugurated with its first performance on 5 May 1568. This theatrical model proved highly successful, leading to the subsequent openings of the Corral de la Cruz and the Corral del Príncipe (now known as the Teatro Español) in 1579 and 1583, respectively. The third period began in 1620 with the emergence of enclosed theatres, notably the Real Coliseo del Buen Retiro in Madrid in 1640, whose construction was promoted by the court of Philip IV (Navas Ruiz, 1991). Throughout these eras, dance remained a constant feature of theatrical performances, particularly through the form known as the *comedia-ballet*. These comedies, as described by Pavis (1987, p. 68), are structured with a series of dance entrances and choreographed passages forming a sequence of scenes. They also include dance as autonomous interludes between scenes and acts.

Similarly, dance in the *corrales de comedias* (open-air theatres common at the time) was encouraged by prominent Golden Age playwrights who incorporated dance into their works. Notable examples include Cervantes' *La Gitanilla* and Calderón de la Barca's comedy *El maestro de danzar*, where popular dances such as the seguidillas and zarabandas are mentioned. By the 18th century, Madrid had three public corrales, two of which, the Corral de la Cruz and the Corral del Príncipe, dated from earlier centuries, and a third, Los Caños del Peral, inaugurated at the

beginning of the century. This latter venue was the precursor to the Teatro Real, primarily used for opera performances. The Teatro del Buen Retiro, favoured by the city's nobility, also remained active.

Theatre in Madrid enjoyed considerable prominence. By the mid-18th century, following several reconstructions of the Corrales del Príncipe and de la Cruz, their seating capacity reached approximately two thousand spectators (Andióc, 1976). Further evidence of the theatre's importance, not only in Madrid but throughout Spain, is found in Manuel García de Villanueva's *Manifiesto por los teatros españoles y sus actores*, published in defence of criticisms levelled in the *Diario de Madrid* concerning certain theatrical productions in the city (Cañas Murillo, 1992).

During the 19th century, Madrid's expansion saw the creation of new theatres which gained wide public acceptance. Dance was regularly featured during intermissions, accompanied by tonadillas, operettas, and sainetes. Spanish dance experienced a marked rise at the expense of foreign dances following the Royal Order of 1799, which prohibited the performance of foreign dances. This led to a boom in popular Spanish dances such as the jotas, fandangos, seguidillas, and especially the bolero, which enjoyed great popularity with numerous variations (Romero Peña, 2008).

At the dawn of the 20th century, Madrid's population reached approximately 500,000, and theatres in neighbourhoods such as Latina, Hospital, and Inclusa offered one seat for every 28 inhabitants (Moisand, 2018). This statistic attests to the city's strong enthusiasm for theatrical entertainment. The extensive coverage of theatrical events in contemporary newspapers, through articles, reviews, news, and photographs, further confirms this cultural fervour. The preference for theatre as a form of entertainment transcended social classes, even surpassing the popularity of cinema. Distinctions existed between "aristocratic" theatres, such as the Teatro Español and Teatro Princesa, and "popular" theatres, including the Teatro Novedades and Teatro Circo Price.

To illustrate this remarkable theatrical dynamism, in the 1921–1922 season alone, 12,400 performances were staged in the city. During the first quarter of the century, comic shows incorporating lyric forms such as dance and music predominated (Dougherty & Vilches de Frutos, 1990). After the dictatorship, dance and opera, including dance scenes, which had previously been a minority taste, began to surpass comedy by employing styles more aligned with contemporary public preferences (Oliva, 2001).

Today, in the 21st century, Madrid remains a theatrical hub. It is no coincidence that one of its most important thoroughfares, the Gran Vía, is often dubbed the Spanish Broadway, owing not only to the number of musicals presented but also to the diverse offerings of dance shows.

It is not possible to specify an exact date when dance began to be performed on the theatre stage. Juanjo Linares, folklorist, dancer, choreographer and renowned figure of Spanish dance folklore, tells us the following:

If we focus on the dances that began to form part of theatrical performances, we must return to the 16th and 17th centuries. It was during this period that dances were incorporated into *entremeses*, *pasos*, *jácaras*, comedies, and other theatrical events. Of distinctly popular origin, the masters of the time adapted these dances not only for the stage but also for practice by the aristocracy during court festivities (Linares, 2003, p. 57).

Until the mid-20th century, all Spanish dance was generally considered under the broad categories of folkloric or popular dance. However, thanks to the renowned dancer, teacher, choreographer, and pedagogue Guillermina Martínez Cabrejas, known as "Mariemma", this perspective changed. She organised the extensive variety of existing Spanish dances and established a classification according to their forms: bailes populares (Traditional Dance), escuela bolera, flamenco, and danza estilizada.

To clarify, Traditional Dance includes the jotas and seguidillas, fandangos and boleros, as well as ritual dances such as sword dances, ribbon dances, cordon dances, among others, thus explicitly excluding bolero and flamenco from this category. This distinction had already been advocated by prominent Spanish scholars, including the musicologist, folklorist, and member of the Royal Spanish Academy, Arcadio de Larrea. In his article in the newspaper *El Español*, entitled *Lo Español y lo Flamenco en Nuestras Danzas*, he expressed the need to differentiate these forms:

Andalusianism has not only wreaked havoc as a theme in films and *cupletista*, its negative effects also extend to other popular forms, particularly dance. Thus, in most cases when speaking of Spanish dances, even among Spaniards and within Spain, Andalusian dances tend to be treated as the default. This prejudice is projected onto the dancers, the audience, and, what is worse, those who perform a critical function (De Larrea, 1944, p. 11).

The modern concept of the dance company arrived in Spain in the 1930s, influenced by new creative forms that had emerged abroad since the beginning of the century. From this period onwards, companies such as those led by Antonia Mercé, known as 'La Argentina', and Encarnación López, known as "La Argentinita", began to achieve great success in Madrid's theatres, incorporating traditional or folkloric dance into their programmes.

For example, on 15 June 1933, the Compañía de Bailes Españoles, led by La Argentinita, performed at the Teatro Español in Madrid a programme which, in addition to well-known works such as *El Amor Brujo* and *El Sombrero de Tres Picos*, included popular dance pieces such as "Aires de Castilla" and "Jota de Alcañiz" (Murga Castro, 2012).

Later, on 2 July 1955, the Mariemma Ballet of Spain performed at the Teatro Madrid with a show curiously sponsored by the press association, during which the piece *Suite de Danzas Vascas*¹ with music by Maestro Guridi, was premiered (La Asociación de, 1955). In 1957, the newspaper *Pueblo* published a review by de Latorre (1957, p. 21) entitled 'Antonio y su Ballet', which praised the show by Antonio Ruiz's company, programmed at the Teatro de la Zarzuela. The review detailed each piece performed by the company, including *Fantasia Galaica*² based on traditional Galician dance.

A year later, the Ballet Español de Silvia Ivars was presented in Madrid. As was customary at the time, the show included Andalusian-inspired dances with music by Albéniz, Granados and Turina, alongside regional dances from Aragón and the Basque Country, as well as a typical Malagueño cuadro featuring Verdiales and Malagueñas (Ele Eme, 1958).

In 1975, the Ballet Folklórico Nacional was created, a company in which popular dances played a leading role, although its existence was so brief that it may almost be considered a mirage. This ballet inherited the musical and dance folkloric tradition compiled by the Women's Section with its Choirs and Dances. The Ballet *Siluetas*, directed by Luisa Aranda and José Antonio, according to the *Pueblo* newspaper's billboards, offered performances at the theatre of the town's Cultural Centre. Among the choreographies performed was the piece "Jota" (Cartelera, 1977).

Companies such as El Ballet Nacional de España (hereafter BNE), La Compañía de Antonio Gades and Ballet Español de María Rosa are some examples of companies that have incorporated folklore into their performances during the second half of the century. For example, in June 1982, the Ballet de María Rosa presented a show at the Centro Cultural de la Villa (now Fernán Gómez) featuring a wide variety of Spanish dance pieces, including one of popular dance entitled *Aragón*³ which, as its name indicates, is based on the traditional dance of the Aragonese region (El Ballet de, 1982).

In 1996, the Ballet Nacional de España premiered the choreography *Romance* at the Teatro de la Zarzuela, showcasing popular dances from regions such as Castile, Catalonia, Valencia, Santander, and the Basque Country, among others. Previously, the company had incorporated the choreography *Jota*⁴ into its performances since 1983. Additionally, in 1979, it premiered *Fantasia Galaica* and *Diez melodías vascas*⁵ (Linares, 2003).

In September 1997, Antonio Gades' Company performed in the Lope de Vega Theatre in Madrid with two different programmes, one of which was *Fuenteovejuna*⁶ as Gades himself declared in a

¹ Choreography by Mariemma

² Choreography by Antonio Ruiz

³ Choreography by Pedro Azorín

⁴ Choreography by Pedro Azorín

⁵ Choreography by Mariemma

⁶ Choreography by Antonio Gades

press conference (EFE, 1997). In this work, traditional dances from various Spanish areas were performed.

As the 21st century progresses, we find that, in 2001, the Ballet Español de María Rosa, stages *La Historia de la Dolores*⁷ in Aragonese style, as reported by *El País* (Vuelve María Rosa, 2001). In 2013, the BNE premiered the piece *Sorolla* at Las Naves del Matadero, where fourteen scenes depicted dances from Extremadura, Salamanca, Andalusia, Aragón, and Valencia, using the painter's works as a unifying theme. This piece was performed again in 2017 at the Teatro Real (Bravo, 2017).

In 2003, the Ballet Nacional de España performed *Fuenteovejuna* by Antonio Gades, and in December 2023, *Aragón* by Pedro Azorín, both at the Teatro de la Zarzuela. It is worth noting that, depending on the season, traditional dance may also appear at the Teatro de la Zarzuela when programmed *zarzuelas* include musical numbers in this style, for example, *El caserío*, *La Dolores*, or *Gigantes y cabezudos*, although not all of these works are performed regularly.

Moreover, the Teatro de la Zarzuela was the venue for the creation of the Ballet Español Antología in 1973, a company established to perform dances from *zarzuelas*, including both traditional and other choreographic works that were programmed each season, as evidenced by press advertisements from January of that year. In July 1973, the newly founded ballet performed at the theatre for a month, presenting *Danza Española*. The second part of the programme included Basque dances, a recreation of a dance from Salamanca, specifically from the village of La Alberca, and concluded with a jota exaltation, composed of various *jotas* and culminating in the Aragonese *Jota de La Dolores*.

Today, Madrid offers a very wide-ranging theatrical dance programme, though traditional dance is less commonly found on its stages than in earlier times.

2. Methodology

This study was structured along a mixed methodological approach. Firstly, a qualitative method based on a review of the literature and archives of newspapers and periodicals, both written and digital, which served to establish the state of the question and contextualise the subject. Secondly, a quantitative method, based on information obtained from the official programming databases of theatres that programme dance, accessed either through their official websites or printed and digitised programmes. This data was then used to count the number of dance companies programmed, the styles performed according to the companies or ballets, and, finally, to quantify the frequency of traditional dance performances in Madrid's theatres. For this purpose, two theatre seasons were analysed, those corresponding to 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 (September to June), for the following venues: Teatro Real, Teatros del Canal, Teatro de la Zarzuela, and Teatro Fernán Gómez. Additionally, dance theatre festivals held in 2023 and 2024 were studied, specifically Madrid en Danza and Los Veranos de la Villa, both of which are prestigious events with an outstanding trajectory.

3. Objectives

The aim of this research is to analyse the current state of traditional dance on the stages of Madrid and to assess the importance of theatre spaces as centres of cultural transmission. The study takes as its reference the programmes of the city's most important theatres that regularly programme dance and maintain official databases, as well as the most renowned dance theatre festivals, in order to obtain relevant information on the reality of this dance style. Additionally, the research seeks to contribute to and stimulate debate concerning Folklore dance, with a view to encouraging the recovery and interpretation of traditional dance in theatres.

4. Analysis

⁷ Choreography by Pedro Azorín

This phase of the research enables a detailed examination of the databases to extract evidence that will inform our conclusions. We begin by collecting information on the companies and ballets programmed, including their performance dates and the dance styles performed, followed by data on theatrical festivals.

4.1. Royal Theatre

Season 2023–2024: Ballet Grand Théâtre de Genève, *Ukiyo-E* (11 to 14 October 2023); Ballet Nacional de España, *Afanador* (9 to 11 February 2024); and Munich Opera Ballet, *La Bayadère* (30 May to 2 June 2024) (Teatro Real, 2023).

Season 2024–2025: San Francisco Ballet, *Swan Lake* (15 to 22 October 2024); National Dance Company, *Don Quixote* (27 February to 2 March 2025); and Vienna State Ballet, *Concertante* (23 to 25 May 2025) (Teatro Real, 2024)

4.2. Canal Theatres

Season 2023–2024: Cía. Elephant in the Black Box, *Atraspasar* (7 and 8 September 2023); Cía. La Turba, *Efecto Migratorio* (12 and 13 September 2023); Cía. Elías Aguirre (16 and 17 September 2023); Cía. Jesús Benzal, *Lo que Ocurre en un Instante* (16 and 17 September 2023); Sydney Dance Company & Rafaela Bonachela, *Ab-Intra* (20 to 22 September 2023); Cía. Cristina Cazorla, *Madriña* (21 and 22 September 2023); Cía. Richard Mascherin, *He Aquí un Acto Romántico* (26 and 27 September 2023); Cía. Alfonso Losa & Patricia Guerrero, *Alter Ego* (30 September and 1 October 2023); Cía. Baldo Ruiz & María Calderón, *Visillo* (5 and 6 October 2023); Cía. Peeping Tom, *S62º 58'* (5 to 8 October 2023); Cía. Urican, *Salva* (14 and 15 October 2023); Cía. Danzarte, *La Memoria que no cesa* (21 and 22 October 2023); Cía. Daniel Abreu, *Vav* (3 to 5 November 2023); Cía. Candela Capitán, *Solas* (1 and 2 December 2023); Cía. Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan, *13 Tonges* (6 and 7 December 2023); Ballet Nacional de España, *La Bella Otero* (14 to 16 December 2023); Lucía Lacarra Ballet, *Cartas Perdidas* (19 to 23 December 2023); Cía. Eduardo Guerrero, *Debajo de los pies* (10 and 11 January 2024); Cía. Olga Pericet, *Materias* (12 to 14 January 2024); La Ribot Ensemble, *DIExtinguished* (2 and 3 February 2024); Out Innespace Dance Theatre, *Bygones* (10 and 11 February 2024); Sol Picó & Charlotta Öfverholm Natusky, *Titanas, el Arte del Encuentro* (10 and 11 February 2024); Cía. Chevy Muraday & Cayetana Guillén Cuervo, *Pandataria* (14 to 25 February 2024); Cía. Antonio Najarro, *Querencia* (16 to 18 February 2024); Cía. Mari Paula, *Fronterizas* (24 and 25 February 2024); Cía. Marcos Flores, *Rayuela* (9 and 10 March 2024); Compañía Nacional de Danza (16 to 21 April 2024); Cía. Eurípides Laskaridis, *Lapis Lazuli* (10 and 11 May 2024); Company Wayne McGregor, *UniVerse* (15 and 16 May 2024); Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker Company, *Creation 2023* (19 May 2024); Ballet National de Marseille, Batseva Dance Company, *Momo* (22 and 23 May 2024); Stephanie Lake Company, *Manifesto* (23 to 26 May 2024); Cía. Manuel Liñán, *Muerta de Amor* (13 and 14 June 2024); Cía. Ondina Maldonado, *No Gender* (28 May to 2 June 2024); Cía. Saburo Teshigawara & Ballet Basel, *Metamorphosis* (20 and 21 June 2024); and Cía. Summer Battle, *Breaking* (23 June 2024) (Comunidad de Madrid, 2023a).

Season 2024-2025: Cía. Eyas Dance Project, *Sexual Texion* (5 and 6 September 2024); Cía. Dancelab Berlín, *Out-Cast* (3 and 4 October 2024); Cía. Mariana Collado & Lusio A. Baglio (La Riducula Danza), *La Revolución de las Flores* (8 and 9 October 2024); Cía. Mar Aguiló, *Swans* (12 and 13 October 2024); Cía. Laia Santanach, *Jarana* (19 and 20 October 2024); Cía. Aurora Bauzá & Pere Jou, *A Beginning* (17 and 18 January 2025); Cía. Asun Noales & Susana Guerrero, *Rito* (23 to 25 January 2025); Cía. Elías Aguirre, *Aurunka* (7 to 9 February 2025); Claudia Castellucci/Compañía Móra, *Sahara* (21 and 22 February 2025); Cía. Hervé Koubi, *Sol Invictus* (13 to 16 March 2025); L-E-V Dance Company, *Into the Hairy* (26 to 28 March 2025); Ballet Preljocaj, *Requiem(s)* (8 and 9 May 2025); Cía. Antonio Ruz, *Norma* (9 to 11 May 2025); Cía. Theo Mercier, *Affordable Solution for Better Living* (7 and 8 June 2025); Escapino Ballet Rotterdam, *Cathedral* (12 to 14 June 2025); Cía. Proyecto Larua, *La Casa Vacía* (18 and 19 June 2025); Cía. Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, *Vlaemsch* (19 to 22 June 2025); Cía. Eva Alonso Martínez & Arthur Bernard, *Wabi Sabi* (21 and 22 June 2025); Cía. Dácil González & Marcelo Fumero, *Mutar. Romper. Vibrar* (27 to 29

June 2025); Malandain Ballet Biarritz, *El Pájaro de Fuego* (17 to 22 December 2024); Cía. Alejandro Lara Dance Project, *Latido y Tañido* (13 and 14 September 2024); Ballet Español de la Comunidad de Madrid, *Suite Española Op. 47* and *Epifanía de lo Flamenco* (12 to 27 October 2024); Cía. Ángel Rojas Dance Project, *Fronteras en el Aire* (25 and 26 January 2025); Cía. Marta Gálvez, *Dama de Noche* (19 and 20 September 2024); Cía. Marta Nogal, *Expectativas* (10 and 11 September 2024); Cía. Helena Martín, *Carne de Perro* (28 and 29 September 2024); Cía. Miller de Nobili, *There Was Still Time II* (24 and 25 September 2024); Cía. Michael Keegan Dolan & Teac Damsa, *Seventy-two Thousand Easy Lessons* (10 to 12 January 2025) (Comunidad de Madrid, 2024).

4.3. Teatro de la Zarzuela

Season 2023–2024: Compañía Nacional de Danza, *La Sylphide* (7 to 17 December 2023); Ballet Nacional de España, 45th anniversary (21 and 22 December 2023) and *Generaciones* (17 to 28 July 2024); *La Rosa del Azafrán* (25 January to 11 February 2024); *La verbena de la Paloma* (8 to 25 May 2024); and *Doña Francisquita* (19 to 30 June 2024) (INAEM, 2023).

Season 2024–2025: Cía. Rafaela Carrasco, *Nocturna* (26 and 27 October 2024); Compañía Nacional de Danza, *La Sylphide* (12 to 22 December 2024); Cía. Úrsula López, *La danza, el baile y el flamenco en la Resurrección de Federico García Lorca* (2 and 3 May 2025); Ballet Nacional de España, *Afanador* (10 to 20 July 2025); *La del manojo de rosas* (20 November to 1 December 2024); *La corte del faraón* (29 January to 16 February 2025); *El Bateo* and *La Revoltosa* (9 to 27 April 2025) (INAEM, 2024).

4.4. Teatro Fernán Gómez, Danza en la Villa season

Season 2023: Cía. Lucía Lacarra & Matthew Golding, *In the Still of the Night* (15 June 2023); Compañía Nacional de Danza, *Carmen* (17 and 18 June 2023); Cía. Daniel Abreu, *La Desnudez* (23 and 24 June 2023); Cía. Led Silhouette & Marcos Morau, *Los Perros* (16 June 2023); Cía. Elías Aguirre, *Flowerheads Show* (22 June 2023); Cía. Alberto Velasco, *Sweet Dreams* (22 and 23 June 2023); Cía. Sara Cano, *Al son* (24 June 2023); and Cía. Sara Calero, *La Finitud* (25 June 2023) (Fernán Gómez, 2023).

Season 2024: Cía. Eduardo Guerrero, *Jondo, del primer llanto al primer beso* (19 June 2024); La Mov Ballet, *Tempus Fugit* (21 to 23 June 2024); Losdedae Dance Company, *Tantas Flores* (27 June 2024); Cía. María Robira & Crea Dance Company, *Odisea* (29 June 2024); Cía. Manuela Barrero Dlcasos, *Con Vos y Conmigo Sea* (26 June 2024); Cía. Ogmia/Eduardo Vallejo, *Mother Tongue* (28 and 29 June 2024); and Cía. Irene Morales, *Verdicta* (30 June 2024) (Fernán Gómez, 2024).

4.5. Madrid en Danza Festival

Season 2023: Kukai Danza Company, *¿Y ahora qué?* (17 and 18 May 2023); Olga Mesa Company, *Esto no es mi cuerpo* (17 and 18 May 2023); Hopesh Shelhter Company, *Double Murder* (18 to 20 May 2023); WArD/waRD Company, *Joy Enjoy Joy* (20 and 21 May 2023); Francisco Hidalgo Cía. WArD/waRD, *Joy Enjoy Joy* (20 and 21 May 2023); Francisco Hidalgo Cía. Flamenca, *Moscas y Diamantes* (20 May 2023); Cía. Provisional Danza & Carmen Werner, *1953* (23 and 24 May 2023); Cía. LaSADCUM, *Aclucalls* (27 and 28 May 2023); Cía. Riva & Repele, *Lili Elbe Show* (1 June 2023); Cía. Rachid Ouramdame & Chaillot Théâtre National de la Danse, *Corps Extrêmes* (3 June 2023); Cía. Nerea Martínez, *Abrazo* (6 June 2023); Compagnie Marie Chouinard, *M* (7 and 8 June 2023); Compagnie N'Soleh, *Faro Faro* (9 to 11 June 2023) (Comunidad Madrid, 2023b).

Season 2024: Ballet National de Marseille, *Age of Content* (9 and 10 May 2024); Cía. Luz Arcas, *Mariana* (10 May 2024); Cía. Mar García & Javi Soler, *Caribe Mix 23* (11 and 12 May 2024); Cía. Vanesa Aibar & Enric Monfort, *La reina del metal* (15 May 2024); Cía. Wayne McGregor, *UniVerse* (15 and 16 May 2024); Cía. Led Silhouette, *Los Perros* (16 May 2024); Cía. María Moreno, *Verso Libre* (17 May 2024); Cía. Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, *Exit Abo* (19 May 2024); Cía. Paula Quintana, *Las Alegrías* (19 May 2024); Cía. Janet Novás & Mercedes Peón, *Mercedes Más Eu* (22 May 2024); Cía. Lasala, *Shine* (23 and 24 May 2024); Ballet Nacional de España, *Afanador* (23 and

24 May 2024); Stephanie Lake Company, *Manifesto* (24 to 26 May 2024); Cía. Alfonso Losa, *Flamenco* (24 May 2024) (Comunidad Madrid, 2024).

4.6. Los Veranos de la Villa Festival

Season 2023: Cía. Antonio Gades, *Bodas de sangre* (18 and 19 July 2023); Cía. Kukai Danza, *Raquetistas* (18 and 19 July 2023); Compañía Nacional de Bailado (Portugal), *Symphony of Sorrows / Cantata* (28 and 29 July 2023); Ballet Nacional de España, *Estampas flamencas* and *El sombrero de tres picos* (2 to 5 August 2023); Compañía de Danza del León y Artes Marciales Huaide de Fuyong de Shenzhen, *Doble suerte* (4 to 6 August 2023); Cía. Eduardo Guerrero, *Guerrero* (11 and 12 August 2023); Cía. Brainsnachers, *Ciclos e cycles* (16 August 2023); Cía. Jimmy Rangel, *Olvido* (25 and 26 August 2023) (Ayto Madrid, 2023).

Season 2024: Cía. Alberto Velasco, *Mover montañas* (10 and 11 July 2024); Compañía Nacional de Danza, *Remansos, Sinatra Suite* (18 to 21 July 2024); Cía. Hiroaki Umeda & Somatic Field Project, *Assimilating / Moving State 1* (24 and 25 July 2024); Cía. Teatro de la Zarzuela, *Zarzuela en danza* (25 to 27 July 2024); Cía. Ntamo Performance, *Uniendo pasos* (27 July 2024); Cía. Blucinqe, *Puccini Dance Circus* (31 July and 1 August 2024); Cía. Ursula López, *Naturalmente flamenco* (3 and 4 August 2024); Cía. Panama Pictures, *Into Thin Air* (9 and 10 August 2024); Cía. La Rue Serendip, *Obra de bolsillo* (13 and 14 August 2024); Cía. Sol Picó, *Carrer 024* (25 August 2024) (Ayto Madrid, 2024).

5. Results

The results of the analysis of dance theatre programmes in Madrid across the two seasons under consideration are presented below.

At the Teatro Real, primarily known as an opera venue, dance performances are programmed annually. In the 2023–2024 season, a total of three companies were featured. The Contemporary Dance category included the Ballet of the Grand Théâtre de Genève, while the Contemporary Spanish Dance category showcased the National Ballet of Spain. Additionally, the Classical Ballet category featured the Ballet of the Munich Opera.

For the 2024–2025 season, the theatre programmed three companies, all within the Classical and Neoclassical styles: the San Francisco Ballet, the National Dance Company, and the Vienna State Ballet.

In total, therefore, six dance companies were programmed at the Teatro Real across the two seasons analysed.

During the 2023–2024 season, the Teatros del Canal programmed a total of 38 dance companies across various styles. Contemporary dance dominated with 19 companies taking the stage, including Candela Capitan Company, Elephant in the Black Box Company, La Turba Company, and Daniel Abreu Company, among others. The Classical and Neoclassical category featured three companies: Sydney Dance Company & Rafaela Bonachela, Lucia Lacarra Ballet, and the National Dance Company. Spanish Dance was represented by three companies, namely Cristina Cazorla Company, Danzarte Company, and Antonio Najarro Company, while the National Ballet of Spain performed in the Contemporary Spanish Dance category.

Flamenco was well represented with five companies, including Eduardo Guerrero, Alfonso Losa & Patricia Guerrero, Manuel Liñán, Marcos Flores, and Olga Pericet. The Dance-Theatre format also featured prominently, with five companies such as Peeping Tom and Baldo Ruiz & María Calderón offering diverse performances. Additionally, the La Ribot Ensemble brought Dance-Video to the festival, while Urban Dance was represented by the Summer Battle Company.

In the following 2024–2025 season, the number of companies programmed at the Teatros del Canal decreased to 26. Contemporary dance remained the most prevalent style, with 17 companies such as Eyas Dance Project, Dancelab Berlin, Mariana Collado & Lusio A. Baglio (La Ridícula Danza), and Hervé Koubi showcasing new works. Only one company was programmed in the Classical and Neoclassical style: Malandain Ballet Biarritz. Spanish Dance featured three companies: Cía. Alejandro Lara Dance Project, Cía. Marta Gálvez, and Ballet Español de la

Comunidad de Madrid. Contemporary Spanish Dance included two companies: Marta Nogal Company and Helena Martín Company. Flamenco was represented by Ángel Rojas Dance Project, Dance-Theatre by Michael Keegan-Dolan & Téac Damsa Company, and Urban Dance by Miller de Nobili Company.

Altogether, these figures reflect a total of 58 dance companies programmed across the two seasons, demonstrating the diversity and vitality of the dance scene at the Teatros del Canal.

The Teatro de la Zarzuela programmed three dance companies and three zarzuelas featuring dance in the 2023–2024 season. Within the Classical and Neoclassical dance style, one company was presented: the Compañía Nacional de Danza. In the Spanish dance style, three companies performed, including the National Ballet of Spain, which presented two different shows, as well as *La verbena de la Paloma* and *Doña Francisquita*. In the Spanish folk dance style, one production was featured: *La Rosa del Azafrán*.

For the 2024–2025 season, a total of four dance companies and four zarzuelas with dance elements were programmed. One company appeared in the Classical or Neoclassical style: the National Dance Company. Four productions were presented in the Spanish dance style: *La del Manojito de Rosas*, *La Corte del Faraón*, *El Bateo*, and *La Revoltosa*. Contemporary Spanish dance was represented by one company, the Ballet Nacional de España. In the Flamenco style, two companies performed: the Rafaela Carrasco Company and the Úrsula López Company.

In total, this resulted in fourteen companies programmed across the two seasons.

Eight dance companies were programmed in the *Danza en la Villa* cycle at the Teatro Fernán Gómez during the 2023 season. In the Contemporary Dance style, five companies performed: Cía. Daniel Abreu, Cía. Led Silhouette & Marcos Morau, Cía. Elías Aguirre, Cía. Alberto Velasco, and Cía. Sara Cano. Two companies appeared in the Classical and Neoclassical Dance styles: Lucía Lacarra & Matthew Golding and the Compañía Nacional de Danza. One company represented the Spanish Dance style: the Sara Calero Company.

In the 2024 season, a total of seven dance companies were programmed. Four were in the Contemporary Dance style: Losdedae Company, María Rovira & Crea Dance Company, Manuela Barrero Dicaos Company, and Ogmia & Eduardo Vallejo Company. One company performed in the Classical and Neoclassical style: La Mov Ballet Company. The Spanish Dance category included the Sara Calero Company, and the Flamenco style featured the Irene Morales Company.

Across the two seasons analysed, a total of fifteen dance companies were programmed at this venue.

The *Festival Internacional Madrid en Danza* featured a total of twelve companies in the 2023 season in the city of Madrid. Of these, ten were Contemporary Dance companies: Olga Mesa Company, Hopesh Shelhter Company, WArD/waRD Company, Provisional Danza & Carmen Werner Company, LaSADCUM Company, Riva & Repele Company, Rachid Ouramdame & Chaillot Theatre National de la Danse Company, Nerea Martínez Company, Compagnie Marie Chouinaro, and Compagnie N'Soleh. The Flamenco style was represented by one company, Francisco Hidalgo Flamenco Company, and the Contemporary Folklore style by Kukai Dantza.

In the 2024 edition, fourteen companies participated in the Madrid programme. Nine were Contemporary Dance companies: Ballet National de Marseille, Luz Arcas Company, Wayne McGregor Company, Led Silhouette Company, Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker Company, Paula Quintana Company, Janet Novás & Mercedes Peón Company, Lasala Company, and Stephanie Lake Company. One company represented Contemporary Spanish Dance: The National Ballet of Spain. Flamenco was performed by three companies: Vanesa Aibar & Enric Monfort Company, María Moreno Company, and Alfonso Losa Company. Additionally, one company, Mar García & Javi Soler, performed in the Concert Dance format.

In total, twenty-six dance companies were programmed across the two seasons analysed.

The *Festival Los Veranos de la Villa* brought together eight companies on the stages of Madrid in the 2023 season. Two companies performed Contemporary Dance: Compañía Nacional de Bailado (Portugal) and Cía. Brainsnachers. Spanish Dance was represented by two companies: Cía. Antonio Gades and Ballet Nacional de España. Flamenco style featured one company: Eduardo Guerrero Company. The Contemporary Folklore style included one company: Kukai Dantza.

Dance-Theatre featured two companies: the Lion Dance and Martial Arts Company Huaide de Fuyong from Shenzhen and Jimmy Rangel Company.

In the 2024 season, eleven companies were invited. Contemporary Dance included three companies: Hiroaki Umeda & Somatic Field Project (performing twice) and Sol Picó. Classical and Neoclassical Dance featured one company: the National Dance Company. Spanish Dance was represented by Teatro de la Zarzuela Company, and Flamenco by Úrsula López Company. Contemporary Folklore featured Alberto Velasco Company. Dance-Theatre included La Rue Serendip Company, while Dance-Circus presented two companies: Panama Pictures and Blucinke. Sport-Dance was represented by Cía. Ntamo Performance.

Across the two seasons analysed, the festival programmed a total of nineteen dance companies.

Table 1: Breakdown of dance companies programmed by style for the 2023–2024 season.

| Dance Style | No. of Companies Programmed |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Contemporary Dance | 37 |
| Classical and Neoclassical Dance | 7 |
| Spanish Dance | 9 |
| Contemporary Spanish Dance | 2 |
| Flamenco | 7 |
| Folklore | 1 |
| Contemporary Folklore | 2 |
| Dance-Theatre | 7 |
| Other | 2 |
| Total Companies programmed in 2023 | 74 |

Source: Author’s elaboration. 2024.

Table 2: Breakdown of dance companies programmed by style for the 2024–2025 season.

| Dance Style | No. of Companies Programmed |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Contemporary Dance | 34 |
| Classical and Neoclassical Dance | 6 |
| Spanish Dance | 9 |
| Contemporary Spanish Dance | 4 |
| Flamenco | 8 |
| Folklore | 0 |
| Contemporary Folklore | 1 |
| Dance-Theatre | 2 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Other | 5 |
| Total Companies programmed in 2024 | 69 |

Source: Author's elaboration. 2024

6. Conclusions

The confluence between traditional dance and theatres in the city of Madrid reveals a rich and complex relationship characterised by a sustained dialogue throughout history. This nexus has developed within venues of considerable heritage and antiquity, some of which have persisted from their establishment in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the present day. Notable examples include the Teatro El Español, originally the *Corral del Príncipe*, and the Teatro Real, constructed on the site formerly occupied by the Teatro de Los Caños del Peral.

In light of the research conducted, a positive conclusion can be drawn: the people of Madrid evidently have a strong appreciation for dance, as demonstrated by the annual programming of between 70 and 75 companies of various styles across the city's theatres and festivals. However, it is notable that Spanish dance occupies a relatively marginal position within these theatrical line-ups. When combining all forms of Spanish dance, Traditional Dance, Escuela Bolera, Flamenco, and Stylised Dance, the data reveal that in 2023, 21 companies were programmed compared to 37 in the Contemporary style, while in 2024, 21 companies were scheduled against 34 Contemporary ballets. Isolating the figures for traditional dance from this overall total, it is apparent that only three companies performing folklore were programmed in 2023, decreasing to a single company in 2024. Consequently, it can be concluded that Spanish dance is at a critical juncture, with traditional dance facing a real threat of extinction in terms of stage performances within the theatres of Madrid. In summary, Contemporary Dance dominates theatrical programming, considerably eclipsing other styles, while folklore dance remains practically absent from the city's cultural offerings.

The preservation of traditional dance currently rests with the Ballet Nacional de España, which, as observed, is responsible for maintaining this expressive form through its performances in the city. A closer examination of its repertoire reveals that, in addition to original works created for the company, such as *Romance* (1996) and *Sorolla* (2013), the company also performs pieces initially premiered by other ballet companies and subsequently revived for its repertoire. Examples include *Fantasia Galaica*, which formed part of the 1957 programme of Antonio and his Ballet Español; *Aragón*, performed in 1982 by the Ballet Español de María Rosa; and *Fuenteovejuna*, which has been performed since 1996 by the dancers of Antonio Gades' company.

As has been noted, the abundance of Spanish companies and ballets performing in the city's theatres was once remarkable, however, a progressive decline in the presence of these national-style groups on Madrid's theatrical bill has been observed from the late twentieth century to the present day. This trend is significant, as it is these types of dance ensembles that have historically brought traditional dance to the stage. Their diminished presence consequently has a negative impact on the current status of traditional dance within the capital's theatrical offerings.

According to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, performances, cultural spaces, and, by extension, the performing arts are recommended for protection, valorisation, and transmission (UNESCO, 2023). Therefore, it is our conviction that continuing this line of research, with new contributions that analyse and promote the conservation of cultural heritage alongside the creation of new choreographic works showcasing this traditional art form, will undoubtedly contribute to enhancing, disseminating, and expanding the heritage of Spanish dance. This heritage is both invaluable and unique, necessitating protection and promotion to ensure that citizens may continue to appreciate it within the theatres of the city of Madrid.

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