



HARLEQUIN

FLAMENCO SPECIAL



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Harlequin and flamenco, a story of mutual co-operation

Some people like their floor 'bare', simply painted black, others prefer it covered with a vinyl dance covering. It's not easy to understand the deeply ingrained, intimate and very personal relationship between a dancer and a floor. Especially when it comes to flamenco dancers. For all of them, it is more than just a floor. It is a fundamental question. A question of soul.

Thirty years ago, Harlequin developed their first dance floor, Harlequin Duo™, which has since become part of a comprehensive range of dance floors and sprung floors, developed in close collaboration with some of the most famous dancers, artistic directors and technical directors in the world. A constant desire for Harlequin, a state of mind, a fundamental requirement.

In 2004, Harlequin began marketing an innovative new flamenco floor, which would take account of the particular demands of flamenco, such as good shock absorption yet good sound, whilst at the same time preserve the authenticity of the flamenco and the health of the dancers. Naturally, exhaustive trials were carried out with the help of well-known flamenco dancers.

In this Flamenco Special, we meet two big names in flamenco: María Pagés, the first flamenco dancer to use Harlequin Liberty™ and secondly, Cristina Hoyos, who comments that, 'the floor offers excellent resonance. Neither the feet nor the back suffer'.

Then we head towards Catalonia to immerse ourselves in the atmosphere of Barcelona's gypsy quarter. At just 11 years of age, El Yiyo is already a real star. Some say he's a

phenomenon, others say a genius and with good reason - he is talented, ambitious and passionate. We met him and he captured our hearts!

Finally, we return to the birthplace of flamenco, Andalucia, where, in the buildings of the old covered market place down a winding alleyway right in the centre of the town of Cadiz, we discover a real gem in the la Merced Municipal Centre for Flamenco. According to Rocío Fernández, its Director, this innovative centre has revitalised the Santa María quarter. The main idea was to create a place where flamenco could be shared and exchanged. The people of Cadiz have quite simply re-appropriated flamenco, and it has once again become something which brings generations together.

In publishing this Flamenco Special, Harlequin would like to pay tribute to all those who are passionate about a dance and who have spent many years in the development and recognition of an art, which is not so much classical yet nevertheless traditional: flamenco.

We would like to thank María Pagés, Cristina Hoyos, El Yiyo, Augustin de Beauce and Rocío Fernández for their invaluable assistance.

María Pagés

The flamboyant magic of flamenco

When María Pagés states that 'flamenco is the only language I know. It can be enriched, influenced, but it is the foundation of my art', she is laying her cards on the table. The truth is that professional flamenco dancers never make light of sincerity and authenticity. It's the essence that transcends everything. To a Spanish dancer, flamenco is more than just a simple dance; it's a means of communication.

For many years, María Pagés has maintained a close relationship with Harlequin, which goes back to the time when she decided to replace her traditional dance floor made of 12mm MDF panels with a new floor, which could produce a pure yet strong sound whilst at the same time reducing physical fatigue among her dancers.

'After a tour in Italy several years ago I decided to look for a floor which could truly meet my needs. I have terrible problems with my knees, due to constantly using different floors on stages. I got in touch with Harlequin and within a month I had found the floor for which I had been searching a long time. I no longer suffer from bad knees and the company is delighted. What's more, I can take my own floor with me on tour!'

It was during the Flamenco Festival in London in 2004 that she officially inaugurated her Harlequin Liberty™ floor. Dominique You, the company's Technical Director at the time, readily compared the Liberty™ floor to a Stradivarius, which maximises the natural sounds associated with flamenco.

María Jesús Pagés Madrigal is a dancer and choreographer who is internationally recognised for her very personal, individual and frank interpretation of flamenco. Born in Triana, the gypsy quarter of Seville on the opposite side of the river to Guadalquivir, her professional career began when she joined the dance company of Antonio Gades.

At 27 years of age she started up her own company, the María Pagés Company. Since then she received the most prestigious awards, including the Cultura Viva award for dance in 2006.

This glittering star of a flamboyant flamenco style thrills us all with the language she has made her own, «sincere, direct and vibrant». For María, flamenco assumes an almost symbolic importance, which transcends all ages, time and space. A bewitching energy of communication between man and culture.

María seeks to be a pioneer. Lo and behold, one day she will decide to cover her new floor with a black vinyl dance floor, as in the days when she was dancing for Gades. 'I do not like to dance on slippery stages. The dance floor eliminates this problem. And I like the fact that the flooring is always perfectly black'.

María Pagés has given much to flamenco. It is she who contributed to the creation of a professional flamenco floor which minimises the risk of injury. She has achieved a true feat: to give flamenco dancers a tool which respects them as much as they respect the dance, which is the heart and soul of the gypsy culture. Who else but Antonio Gades could sum up the meaning of that strong spirit when he says, '...my creator. You are mad...'

10 questions for María Pagés



1. My main characteristic

Tolerance.

2. The main quality I look for in a man or woman

Loyalty.

3. What I appreciate most in my friends

Their unconditional support.

4. My favourite dance show

'Carmen' with Antonio Gades and 'Sevilla', my latest project.

5. My favourite poets

José Saramago, Antonio Machado, Miguel Hernández, Ben Sahl...

6. My heroes

I prefer anonymous heroes and there are many...

7. The word I dislike the most

The word 'war'.

8. My bedtime reading

Well...I am one of those people who reads seven books at once!

9. My motto

Help thy neighbour.

10. To me, Harlequin means...

...the pleasure that my dance floor gives me.

Cristina Hoyos

Enigmatic yet eclectic

‘Flamenco by definition is magical and enigmatic. It’s a living art. It’s a dance which reflects life, joy, tragedy, love’, proclaims Cristina Hoyos. Born in Seville, the Artistic Director of the Flamenco Ballet of Andalusia and the Flamenco Museum is much more than just a flamenco dancer.

She maintains she is an actress, choreographer and classical dancer. ‘The emotion that one sees in the theatre can’t be found elsewhere. And you must believe me, because I have danced in so many different places!’

It’s a combination of these three arts that make up the eclectic world of Cristina Hoyos. Some know her for her performance during the opening and closing ceremonies at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, others for her presence since the 70s on the biggest stages, both in Spain and abroad.

Her difficult early days dancing in tourist bars have given her nerves of steel. After contracts with several different companies, Antonio Gades hired her in 1969 and she partnered him for 20 years. In 1989, she created her own dance company and it was she in 1991 who introduced flamenco to the Paris Opera with her first show ‘Sueños de flamenco’.

For Cristina Hoyos, it’s all about relationships, about comings and goings. The flamenco museum, which she currently manages, is testimony to this and rightly so. It’s precisely her versatile and multi-disciplinary approach which so specifically defines this place. ‘It’s extremely important to us that people of other races and different cultures have the opportunity to share in the emotion that comes with flamenco. It’s a way of broadcasting it to the world.’

First of all, there is the relationship between the floor and the dancer. For Cristina Hoyos, this contact is fundamental. ‘The floor is very important to me. I must learn to stamp and move around on it. To know how to pound it with my heel. And often, it is difficult to do. But this time, I found what I needed...’.

In the museum, three areas are equipped with Harlequin Liberty™: a little stage in the centre for small performances, a large basement area as well as a glass walled rehearsal studio at the entrance, which allows visitors to join in flamenco rehearsals. ‘The dance floor has the qualities and conditions suitable for practising zapateo. To obtain a good resonance. So that neither the feet nor the back suffer’.

Cristina makes no concessions when she talks about her passion. She advocates the versatility between dance, flamenco and theatre and the alchemy which occurs. But what is the common denominator? Emotion, always emotion and nothing but emotion. She constantly reiterates the importance ‘of having your feet on the ground and your head on your shoulders’. An important piece of advice, whether one is an artist or not. After all, nothing is more individual and more authentic than flamenco.



10 questions for Cristina Hoyos

1. My main characteristic

Positive, responsible. I look for what is fair.

2. Main quality I look for in a person

Honesty.

3. What I appreciate most in my friends

Friendship. Lasting friendship.

4. My favourite dance show

I have seen so many of them in my life, but I don't have a favourite. I like classical dance, contemporary dance and, of course, flamenco.

5. My favourite poets

I have read a lot of Lorca and also Neruda. These are my favourites, but there are many others who interest me.

6. My heroes

Rather, a heroine. Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She achieved and continues to achieve incredible work.

7. The word I dislike the most

Torture. It should never exist.

8. My bedtime reading

The last book I read was given to me by my niece: 'The boy in striped pyjamas'.

9. My motto

My family, my husband and dance.

10. To me, Harlequin means...

...the first thought that comes to mind is the fantastic interpretation of the character by an actor friend in the piece "Harlequin, servant of two masters". Obviously, the word also makes me think of my dance floor!



‘For El Yijo, Harlequin Liberty™ has been a revelation, as if someone had given him the instrument he had been looking for’.

El Yiyo: 'A diamond, an uncut diamond'

At the beginning of 2004, at the end of a performance, the famous flamenco dancer Farruquito spoke to the father of the then eight year old El Yiyo saying, 'you have a diamond in your hands, an uncut diamond, but a real flamenco diamond!', Farruquito was referring to El Yiyo.

In the gypsy quarter of Barcelona, El Yiyo is a real star. At 11 years of age, El Yiyo, the diminutive name for Miguelillo, and by which he was known by his grandfather, surprises with his expressive gestures and incredible body language. Some say a phenomenon. A genius, say others.

'He has a natural gift. He watches a lot of videos. Also, he follows the flamenco shows performed by the big names in flamenco, such as El Farruquito', says his manager, Augustin de Beauce. He met the young boy at a flamenco class which he had been attending regularly for several years. Loyal to the gypsy culture, El Yiyo still has his father and family around him, who admit to having recognised the young boy's exceptional talent from a very early age. 'At family reunions we would sing and dance. Early on we realised he was different. One could see that he had a gift, something very special within him', his father told us.

'Flamenco Puro', says the poster hanging in his garage. A clear and simple message and the perfect interpretation of the flamenco danced by El Yiyo. By combining the best of gypsy and Andalusian culture into a single art form, he is determining his own personal and individual interpretation of flamenco. His creativeness is in its basic stages, his sad and innocent expression is underlined by his natural charisma and graceful stature. It's the way he moves, the 'taconeado', or the way he feels the dance which to him is the most important thing of all.

Like all good dancers, El Yiyo immediately recognises a floor by its sound and feel. 'It's not a question of wait and see. From the moment I try it, I can tell if a floor is going to be right for me or not'. Augustin de Beauce confesses to having spent a long time looking for an adequate floor for his young protégé. It was not an easy task because he was looking for a floor capable of reproducing an authentic flamenco sound. When El Yiyo received a Harlequin Liberty™ panel to test, 'it was like a revolution, as if someone had given him the instrument he had been searching for'. This was as much from the point of view of sound as shock absorption. The sound is strong, but he cannot feel the vibrations in his legs. Since he has been dancing on a Liberty™ floor, we have noticed his dancing has improved, as if his movements are more free'.

El Yiyo agrees with his manager's choice. 'It's a real pleasure to dance on a Harlequin Liberty™ floor. It gives a good sound and I feel safe'. His father concludes, 'Who can say whether El Yiyo will one day become a flamenco star. I just want him to do what he loves and hope that he realises his dreams'.



The la Merced Municipal Centre of Flamenco

Interview with Rocío Fernández, Technical Cultural Advisor for the municipality of Cadiz and Director of la Merced Municipal Centre for Flamenco.

In 2006, a unique centre came about in the Santa María area of Cadiz. Located in the old covered market place buildings in the capital of Andalusia, its architectural prowess fills visitors with wonder. Rocío Fernández, its Director, states 'Frankly, they stand there open-mouthed!'

'All dancers consider the Centre a little treasure. Both for its facilities and for the excellent surfaces in the dance studios'. There are six sound isolated rooms, each equipped with a Harlequin Liberty™ sprung floor covered with Harlequin Standfast™ dance surface, dressing rooms and a central amphitheatre equipped with removable folding seats with a capacity of 250 places.

The Director explains to us that the aim of the Centre is to be both inspiring and, at the same time, practical. 'It is essentially rehearsal space. Everybody can come and practise flamenco for an hour a day. What's more, it is completely free'. The studios are loaned free of charge, shows are put on and the artists don't ask for payment. We want the performers of Cadiz to feel at home here. To know that they can rehearse, prepare their shows or organise flamenco workshops'.

To everybody's surprise, it is not only the Centre that has become an acclaimed success, but the whole of the medieval area of Santa María. This is a real triumph, a result of intelligent town planning, which has been well thought-out and well administered.

It should be noted that the Centre offers numerous flamenco based workshops, conferences and performances, all of which are free. So use them !



5 questions for Rocío Fernández

1. My main characteristic

Perseverance and willpower.

2. The qualities I look for in a man or woman

Sincerity.

3. My favourite dance show

'De Grana y Oro' and 'Cádiz'. It was rehearsed and put on in the Flamenco Centre that I run and I have a particular fondness for it. The latest show was very well done by all those who participated in it.

4. My motto

Never put off until tomorrow things you could do today and always look towards the future.

5. To me, Harlequin means...

...professionals like me, who like things done well!

Harlequin Liberty™

The floor which reassures

Versatile sprung floor with shock absorbing elastomer blocks, available in portable or permanent versions.

NEW
LATCHING
SYSTEM
FAST AND SIMPLE



5 good reasons to choose a LIBERTY™ floor

1. Ideal for classical, contemporary dance, flamenco and hip hop
2. Conforms to DIN standard 18032 part II
3. Offers identical characteristics across the whole floor (no hard spots)
4. Reduces injury risk due to its dual density elastomer blocks
5. Modular floor, easy to lay down, take up and move

An ideal solution for more effective injury prevention.
Combine it with Harlequin STANDFAST™ dance floor for the best performance.

Harlequin Activity™

Sprung floor with unique acoustic properties

Permanent, multi purpose sprung dance floor.



5 good reasons to choose an ACTIVITY™ floor

1. Ideal for classical, contemporary dance, flamenco and hip hop
2. Conforms to the DIN standard 18032 part II
3. Offers identical characteristics across the whole floor (no hard spots)
4. Floating floor system with an impact sound reduction from 22 to 24 dB
5. Excellent value for money

VERSATILITY AND STRENGTH

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Harlequin Europe SA
 29, rue Notre-Dame
 L-2240 Luxembourg
 Tel. INTL +352 46 44 22
 Tel. FR +352 46 44 99
 Tel. DE +352 46 39 39
 Free phone 00 800 90 69 1000
 Fax +352 46 44 40
www.harlequinfloors.com
info@harlequinfloors.com

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