

ARTLURKER

Flamenco, Egyptian Style: Ballet Flamenco La Rosa at the Colony Theater

Tuesday, April 12, 2011



Ballet Flamenco La Rosa, *Cleopatra y Cesar*.

The 2011 Miami Dance Festival opened last weekend at the Colony Theater with the world premier of *Cleopatra y Cesar*, an evening-length performance by Miami-based Ballet Flamenco La Rosa. The company's artistic director Ilisa Rosal has shown serious devotion to the art of flamenco – this year her company celebrates its 26th anniversary. For *Cleopatra y Cesar*, Rosal has assembled a large ensemble of accomplished flamenco dancers including Leonor Leal, a sought-after soloist from Sevilla who makes her American debut in this production.

The original George Bernard Shaw play *Cleopatra and Cesar*, interpreted here by Ballet Flamenco La Rosa, is filled with romance, betrayal, military threats and assassinations, the kinds of high-pitched emotional exchanges that destroy and rebuild families and nations. Perfect material for a night of flamenco, a dance style marked by emotional intensity. The plot revolves around Cesar's arrival in ancient Egypt. He came as a conqueror, but while wandering through the desert, he encounters a young Cleopatra at the feet of a Sphinx and a passionate love affair develops. Cleopatra, who doesn't realize who she has fallen for, has her own grand ambitions. She is vying with her ten-year old brother Ptolemy for rule over Egypt.



Leonor Leal as Cleopatra.

Ballet Flamenco La Rosa's *Cleopatra y Cesar* sticks to Shaw's basic storyline as a structure for a series of dramatic exchanges, both sensual and confrontational. Striking body poses inspired by Egyptian hieroglyphics merge beautifully with classic flamenco, and notable moments from the original play, including the famous scene where Cleopatra is rolled inside a rug and smuggled out of captivity, give life and variation to the many dance sequences. Flamenco is not always a forum for subtlety, but Leal rendered Cleopatra with both fire *and* grace. Her elegant arm work and impassioned carriage were believably royal, and a gorgeous and extensive wardrobe emphasized her character's stature and sensuality.

Although Leal was in a league all her own, the entire ensemble, including an unusual number of talented male dancers, was strong and solid. The surprise of the night was young Gino Cosculluela's brief appearance as Cleopatra's brother Ptolemeo. Child performers are a rare sight in flamenco – a high level of maturity and life experience are considered indispensable for the form's strong emotional tone. This little guy stole the spotlight with unwavering confidence and dignity as he engaged Cleopatra in a contest of posturing and temper tantrums.



Left to Right: Gabriel Arango as Cesar, José Junco as Potiano and Gino Cosculluela as Ptolemeo

Music is as much a part of flamenco tradition as movement, and the original music orchestrated for *Cleopatra y Cesar* by Jose Luis Rodriguez and Paco Fonta, in collaboration with Rosal and the other musicians and

performers, was one of the most developed aspects of the performance. Spanish guitar and vocals were complemented by Middle Eastern vocals and the sound of an oud, effectively evoking a desert mood.

Rosal is to be commended for her creative departures from the usual; *Cleopatra y Cesar* borrows the language of flamenco but moves away from traditional structures. The choreography was complex, offering beautiful, moving images and precise passages of footwork that were well-integrated with the live music. For flamenco fans, there was plenty to enjoy, and when the show was over, the crowd rewarded Ballet Flamenco La Rosa with enthusiastic cheers.]

This post was contributed by [Annie Hollingsworth](#), [artburstmiami.com](#).

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TRANSIT ANTENNA HAS LANDED

Wednesday, April 6, 2011



The TRANSIT ANTENNA bus, a waste vegetable oil and solar powered 1981 Greyhound.

No more than an hour ago, the TRANSIT ANTENNA crew took up residence on the Design District's Palm Lot in preparation for their fundraiser this Saturday (Noon til Midnight). The event, which takes the form of a fun fair carnival will see a broad section of Miami's creative personalities at their weirdest as they emulate traditional sideshow rides, games and freaks. In keeping with the theme each attraction at the fun fair will require tickets just like a real county fair. Tickets will be on sale from a booth on site and all funds raised will go towards the TRANSIT ANTENNA project, a mobile creative workshop and educational resource for alternative energy and waste systems.