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Dance Review

Combative Fire in Swirls, Wails and Striking Steps

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A [Noche Flamenca](#) performance is created on the premise of a steady build: there are carefully placed sparks along the way, but just about every show leads to fireworks in the form of Soledad Barrio. No matter how many times you've seen [Ms. Barrio dance](#), the experience is strangely intimate; there's something voyeuristic and cathartic about watching a woman pry open her soul, scatter it on the floor and put it back together again.



On Thursday night at the Cherry Lane Theater, the company, led by its artistic director and producer Martín Santangelo, opened a six-week season with a mesmerizing array of music and dance, including Ms. Barrio's deeply expressive "Siguriya" (the fireworks). Still, she is not the only reason to marvel at this tightly knit group of two guitarists, three dancers and three singers.

In "Amanecer" ("The Awakening"), a group premiere by Mr. Santangelo, the choreography serves as a lively introduction to lean unison steps performed by Ms. Barrio, Antonio Jiménez and Juan Ogalla. In red ruffles, Ms. Barrio's dancing form — soft, malleable, yet quick — stands out like a crimson slash against the brick walls of the high-ceilinged stage.

Ms. Barrio re-enters in a swirl of white silk to perform "Alegrías," a New York premiere that she choreographed for Mr. Ogalla and herself. His dancing is full of power and sharp accents: when Mr. Ogalla's feet hit the floor, it's as if he were striking a match. "Alegrías" is a muscular duet, full of combative fire, and Ms. Barrio matches that forcefulness with a slightly teasing candor.

In the new solo "Farruca," [Mr. Ogalla](#), who looks a bit like the actor Jeff Conaway — after Kenickie and before rehab — demonstrates his nimble footwork while preserving

stillness in his upper body (remarkably, he vibrates). The bearded, lanky [Mr. Jiménez](#), in “Solea por Bulerías” conjures the image of a grizzly [Fred Astaire](#).

His dancing is such a mixture of precision and wildness that, as with Ms. Barrio, he is almost part creature, part human. And Ms. Barrio’s “Siguiriya” astounds, particularly when she is accompanied by the singer Manuel Gago: she responds to his wail, lifting her arms and tilting into a backbend so slowly that they seem to be bound in some ancient way. You see the music, hear the dance.

No matter the repertory — and this company often mixes it up during a long run — Noche Flamenca unearths a primal place that eschews the flashier, more contemporary aspects of flamenco. Mr. Santangelo closes the program more soberly than usual, with “Esta Noche No Es Mi Día,” created as a memorial for Antonio Vizarraga, a singer with the company who died in 2005. The title is taken from one of Mr. Vizarraga’s frequent comments after a bad show: “Tonight just wasn’t my day.” The performers carried red roses and eventually formed a circle to raise their hands to the light. It wasn’t so much maudlin as eerie, and the silence was deafening.

Soledad Barrio and Noche Flamenca perform through Jan. 12 at the Cherry Lane Theater, 38 Commerce Street, West Village; (212) 989-2020, nocheflamenca.com.