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Rafael Amargo is considered a national treasure by the Spaniards. The Spanish national daily newspaper *El Mundo* describes him as "having drunk from the fountains of the most pure flamenco". A flamenco dancer by choice, Rafael is all set to perform in Dubai for the second time, this time bringing his latest work *Tiempo Muerto* to the emirate in November. VEATHIKA JAIN met the man with all the moves.

Spanish *flair*

How did Flamenco happen to you?

It happened completely by chance. My father wanted me to do something else in life, but when I was very young I was influenced by this dance form, and developed a liking for it. I went on to train myself, studied it and am still learning.

Flamenco requires a lot of muscle work. How do you take care of your body?

I dance so much during the day that my exercise regime is done. I also workout as and when time permits. Flamenco is not just about the perfect body, its also about the right attitude— you either have it or you don't. One needs to be passionate about it and have a positive attitude in order to do full justice to this dance form.

Do you follow a particular diet to stay agile?

It's difficult to be on a diet when you have a mother who cooks delicious food. I do try to control what I eat. I love to try out different cuisines, especially those of the countries in which I am performing.

You have been dancing for 23 years and have now worn the director's hat as well. Which role do you like the best?

I started out as a dancer and enjoyed it very much; the feeling you get when you are on stage is simply out of this world. Lately, I have started choreographing and directing my own shows, which gives me a feeling of fulfilment. It's like creating something from scratch, which helps in challenging my creativity as I like to do something different in every show. I enjoy doing things which involve creativity and I like to do something uniquely different in my performances.

What will you be bringing to Dubai in November?

I will be showcasing my latest work *Time out* in Dubai. Its a repertoire of six of my previous shows. It's basically my time out working in different shows. I wanted to go to the roots of flamenco, showing people the most traditional part of flamenco with the best soundtrack. The music of this performance is amazing, I have chosen all the lyrics myself and spent a lot of time on the technical details of the sound, lighting and music. It has 12 musicians, besides me and five female dancers.

This is your second time in Dubai.

Do you think people relate to Flamenco here?

It's about the people and the stage. My earlier performance was appreciated by the people of Dubai. As you know, Spain has its origins from the Middle East, so there is a relation. I am sure people will like my show as they will my power and strength. It's all about the venue, technically you need to feel yourself. Flamenco is all about interaction with people and I dance to give them what they want. And I'll be doing the same when I dance in November.

So, will it be the purest form of Flamenco in the show or will there be some fusion?

The show will have some parts in traditional Flamenco, but I'm always thinking of doing fusion. I have incorporated hiphop and break dance in my earlier show *Enramblao*. And in *Time Out* there's Tango. Flamenco and Tango are very close and it's always great to learn to amalgamate Flamenco with different dance forms.



After performing around the world and winning so many awards, which particular show do you feel closest to? Well, all are special to me, but my first show holds a special place in my heart, as it was the first time I attempted to do something. The second show was inspired by one of Spain's greatest poets, Federico Garcia Lorca's play, on which I did Flamenco and it got me instant recognition and many awards. In 2002, I received two Max Awards for Dramatic Arts: Best Male Dance Performer and Best Choreography for *Amargo*. So, when you get fame and recognition you owe it to the show that got you there! ■



Show details:

Dates: 1- 2 November 2007.

Time: 4.30 pm (matinee) 8.30pm (evening show.)

Length of shows: 2 acts of 45 minutes each, plus an interval of 20 minutes between the 2 acts.

Venue: Madinat Jumeirah Theatre.

Ticket prices: From Dhs275- Dhs750

(for corporate/VIP tickets). Available at the Madinat Jumeirah theatre box office. Log onto www.madinatjumeirah.com for more information.

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