The Downstairs
66 East 4th Street, NYC, 10003
June 30 - July 1, 2023

presents

Al Son Son 2023
Sonia Olla & Ismael Fernandez
Flamenco Company Student Showcase
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Flamenco Company Student Showcase

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/CHOREOGRAPHER
Sonia Olla

CO-ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/
MUSICAL DIRECTOR/CANTAOR
Ismael Fernández

LEAD GUITAR
Guillermo Guilhem

STUDENT GUITAR
Nico Sansiviero

PERCUSSION
Luis Ossa

THE COMPANY
Francesca Bartolini, Jane Berdichevskaya,
Shannon Botts, Dana Bricken, Maria Alena Docena,
Isabel Estrada-Jamison, Pilar Jiménez, Mia Lee,
Pete Manigbas, Ines Molina, Magali Ostergaard,
Shigeko Sara Suga, Kay Yano, Renee Zou

STAFF VOLUNTEERS
Martha Smith, Melanie Carminati

This show runs 90 minutes with no intermission
AL SON SON FLAMENCO was first performed at TriBeCa Performing Arts Center in May 2015 followed by La MaMa Moves Dance Festival at La MaMa in May 2016. Al SonSon Flamenco was also featured as “Tablao” at Centro Español de Queens (NY) in 2016 and 2017 and at the JKO High School in 2018 and 2019. In April of 2019, many of the Al Son Son Company performed as part of the Havana Dance festival in Havana, Cuba. In 2022 the Creative Cultural Center at St. Veronica hosted.

The title of the concert, Al Son Son, is difficult to translate into English, but it roughly means “Take us to the rhythms (grooves / swings) of the heart of Flamenco.” “Al” is a combination word of A (to) and El (the) in Spanish and “Son” is an abbreviation for soniquete or sonsonete, signifying rhythms and sounds.

Sonia Olla & Ismael Fernandez
The Sonia Olla & Ismael Fernández Flamenco Company is led by baillora Sonia Olla and Cante Singer Ismael Fernández. Sonia Olla, native of Barcelona and graduate of the Instituto de Teatro y Danza and Ismael Fernandez, from Seville, and of Gypsy descent have both toured and collaborated with flamenco greats including Antonio Canales, Eva la Yerbabuena, Rafaela Carrasco, Merche Esmeralda, María Pagés, La Farruca.

The couple collaborated with the pop-icon Madonna to choreograph the worldwide “Rebel Heart Tour” 2015-2016, and 2017 worked with Ricky Martin providing Flamenco choreography and vocals for Lola Lola in his show “All In!”

They are the recipient of the CUNY Dance Initiative (CDI) Residency in both 2018 and 2019 and debuted their original piece “Ella” at CDI’s 5th Anniversary Fest and recipients of the New York City 2021 City Artist Grant. They are 2022-2023 NYFSCA Fellows in Choreography and sponsored in part through Creatives Build NY.

The duo have performed their own shows on tour in Europe, Asia and the Caribbean - along with New York venues including Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Blue Note and Joe’s Pub. In 2022 the couple performed in the Atlanta Opera’s Carmen, and for the Minnesota Opera’s opening gala.

Sonia and Ismael are teaching artists at Berklee School of Music, and their exploration of traditional Flamenco rhythm and music is the one of its kind in the USA. In 2023 the couple performed with Wynton Marsalis at for Jazz at Lincoln Center and at the Kennedy Center, and their work was featured in the Pregones Theater’s Latin Spring Dance Festival.
As a young girl, **Maria Alena Docena** was fascinated with dance so her mother took her to her first dance training, a ballet class with Odon Sabarre, the first Filipino dance scholar to Russia when he returned to the Philippines. Years passed and she found flamenco in New Jersey thru Lisa Botalico, Eva Lucena, Claudia Morena and Krystina Cardenas of Alborada Spanish Dance Theater. In the winter of 2018, she felt brave enough to cross the Hudson to take classes with Sonia and she participated in Al Son Son 2019. She credits Sonia and Ismael for advancing her understanding of the art of flamenco.

**Dana Bricken** took her first dance class when she was four years old and studied ballet, pointe, jazz, and modern as a child and adolescent. Seeing Riverdance at Radio City Music Hall at a young, impressionable age piqued her interest in percussive dance styles, and she had a “love at first sight” moment after taking her first flamenco class at age thirteen. She kept up her flamenco practice whenever possible during her high school and college summers, adding bellydance to the mix in her late teens. After college and throughout her early twenties she continued to study both bellydance and flamenco, but starting in her mid-twenties she decided to dedicate herself solely to the latter. Dana is thrilled to participate in her fourth Al Son Son production and wishes to sincerely thank Sonia and Ismael for their neverending guidance, patience, and dedication to their students!

**Mia Lee** learned to dance as an adult in NYC, starting with Salsa and then Argentine Tango. She then fell in love with Flamenco in 2017 and has been learning from Sonia Olla and Ismael Fernández since.

**Pilar Jimenez** found her love of Flamenco originally from her Mom attending shows and enjoying music and cante letras together. Pilar has been performing in Al Son Son recitals under Sonia and Ismael since 2016 and is grateful for the NYC Flamenco community, teachers and fellow students.

**Kayoko Yano** has been learning Flamenco with Sonia and Ismael since 2019. Kay started learning Tangos Online during pandemic and continued Tangos and Bulerias in person classes after the Pandemic's end.

**Francesca Bartolini** was born and raised in Rome before she moved to the US for her graduate education. She has been a flamenco aficionada since 2008 and enjoys spending time in Andalusia whenever she gets a chance. During the day Francesca heads a biomedical research laboratory at Columbia University.
Shigeko Sara Suga has been studying with Sonia and Ismael since 2015. She has recently performed as a featured dancer in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* at the Metropolitan Opera, has performed for over 150 theatrical productions since 1986. Shigeko works with Pan Asian Repertory Theatre and Yara Arts Group. Further credits available at www.shigekosuga.com

Jane Berdichevskaya discovered flamenco when she took her first class at Steps on Broadway. She was amazed at the depth and intricacy of this art form. Dancing flamenco for her is like being transposed into a different world. It is going back in time and becoming part of a story that is incredibly rich, complex and beautiful. She loves learning traditional flamenco rhythms and footwork, and putting it all together with a song. She is thrilled to be part of Sonia Olla and Ismael Fernández *Al Son Son Flamenco* Student Show!

Pete Manigbas is an IT Engineer by day and people know me as a salsero but I am an undercover flamenco enthusiasts by night. Dedicate the showcase to my mom.

Ines Molina's past performances include: singing opera arias and duets at the Weill Recital Hall in Carnegie Hall; singer/dancer at the Alice Tully Hall in the production of the opera Kurofune; singer/dancer in The Heights Players’ production of *Guys and Dolls*. She also performed Jazz numbers with the Ismael Guiser ballet at various theaters in her hometown of Sao Paulo, Brazil. She would like to thank Sonia and Ismael for their teaching and dedication with this show, and would like to dedicate these performances to her parents and her Spanish heritage.

Isabel Estrada-Jamison owes her first experiences with dance to the adventurous spirit of her late mother, Barbara. A dancer herself, Barbara exposed her daughter to dances spanning the continents, from the tablaos of Sevilla to the rumbas of La Habana. As a professional Afro-Cuban Folklore dancer, Isabel has performed throughout the United States and Cuba. She has been passionately studying Flamenco with her teachers, Sonia and Ismael, since 2014.

**SPECIAL THANKS:** Melanie, Shigeko Sara Suga, Angel Betancourt, Cathy Peck, the staff crew and leadership of La MaMa, Materials for the Arts, Fracture Atlas, CUNY Dance Initiative

**Funders:** Sonia Olla & Ismael Fernandez are 2022 -2023 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellows. Sonia Olla & Ismael Fernandez Flamenco Company is sponsored by Creatives Rebuild NY.
A full program with information on this production can be found on the *Al Son Son 2023* page of the La MaMa website.

In addition you can scan the QR code Poster located in the theatre lobby for access to the digital program.
La MaMa’s historic, landmark building at 74 East 4th Street is undergoing an urgently needed complete renovation and restoration to preserve the historic façade, create building-wide ADA accessibility, and provide much needed performance, exhibition and community space for decades to come.

La MaMa, founded by Ellen Stewart in 1961, has been on east 4th Street since 1967. La MaMa embraces every person in its community and is legendary as the place where new artists of all nations, cultures, races, and identities are given opportunities. It is the place where art begins.

To learn more about the renovation, or to make a donation please visit www.lamama.org/remakeaworld
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July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022
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