



TONIA

Luz Arcas, La Fármaco

A PERFORMANCE BY
LUZ ARCAS,
LA PHÁRMACO

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EL FESTIVAL DE OTOÑO
DE MADRID





Toná emerged in the course of the various trips to Malaga that I made to visit my rather ill father. In his home, where I was raised, there was a reencounter with references, icons, symbols that I had almost completely forgotten. I recalled anecdotes and fears, reconnecting with the folklore of my childhood. I wanted to dance a feeling true to that folklore: death as a celebration of life, the “fiesta”, and a catharsis that is both individual and collective.

I was working on a new project at the time with musician Luz Prado and visual artist Virginia Rota. I suggested to these two women, also from Malaga, that we explore this common poetic patrimony. Luz had worked extensively on the “verdiales”, a folk musical and dance tradition typical of Malaga that predates flamenco and can be traced back to pre-Roman times. The “verdiales” probably originated in Phoenician times and have, to a large extent, resisted successive cultural appropriations and all attempts at domestication. Virginia, for her part, had just opened an exhibition about mourning in Andalusia.

Collective memory and popular imaginaries are vital because they give us shelter from the storm, providing refuge from individualism, inviting us to forge a common shared narrative. As with anything related to the “people”, this cultural memory is undoubtedly problematic at multiple levels. But returning to revitalise said memory by dirtying and renaming it is an act of liberty that the collective can alone administer through performativity in defiance of cultural totalitarianism or any neoliberal attempt to fix or capture meaning. It is also an act of resistance against the attempt by our system to bury and deny illness, old-age and death, which serves only to make us weak both culturally and spiritually, thereby rendering us as passive docile subjects.

Amongst my father’s book collection, I rediscovered a biography of Trinidad Huertas, “La Cuenca”, an early nineteenth-century dancer from Malaga who gained worldwide fame for a routine in which she performed as a female bullfighter, caught in the midst of the action, that earned her the epithet, “The Brave Woman”.





I have recuperated other references from my childhood such as the figure of Our Lady of Mount Carmel hoisted aloft in the procession by the sea on July 16 every year. As with so many other festivities belonging to the realm of the popular, it exudes a Pagan archaism that pre-dates Catholicism. The Church, however, has always exploited them to construct its own myths. I can still recall when a friend of my father's took us at night to wait for the virgin to appear amidst the olive trees. I am interested in the experience of the miracle as construed by Pasolini or Ana Mendieta: the metaphysics of the flesh, a wanting manifestation of the spectacular, the unexpected witness.

Miracles are comprised of many things but, first and foremost, the need for them to take place. Their devotional character does not require too elaborate a formal structure. As my friend Rafael S.M. Paniagua says: "the efficiency of popular cultural forms is of another kind. The precision is of another kind. We can elaborate a belief on the basis of an abject image, a stain on the wall, a badly painted Christ. Popular devotion arranges itself around bad images."



I confess that the process of creation has been a liberation. One can but hope that it will be for the audience as well.

Toná is born from the need to embody a broad identity, that does not strive to have its essence defined, linked organically to collective memory and popular imaginaries with all the conflicts that entails. A poetry that transmits flesh, the vital pulse, full of rage and joy, as well as of prejudices and superstitions. An ancestral and fertile pain that, from childhood onwards, gradually makes us what we are.

An identity as luminous as it is dark, which cannot be reduced to the metrics of productivity and consumption, a physical outpouring that refuses to be inscribed by the inertia of opinion and its euphoria, posing, protocol.

A body reconciled with its vital forces, interwoven with illness, old age, death and that brazenly embroils itself with symbols so that they may be sullied, trod upon, renamed, whilst shouting: they are ours, they belong to us.

A body that doesn't choose between believing and suspecting: faith and nihilism as brothers in arms,



repeating to each other that loving is to have the keys to heaven and realise that heaven is empty.

“Shame is the feeling that shall save Humanity.” It won't be love, but rather shame.

A pain that is ancient and fertile: flesh, bodies. Identity is the mystery that hides in every body and emerges from the intimate reconciliation with shame.

I look for dance in bodies, its folklore, its wound, not the virtuous dance of trained bodies, but dance-human dignity summoning us, daring to stamp the floor with the force of shame. The most beautiful anger, the most open wound.



ARTISTIC TEAM

Dance
Luz Arcas

Violin & Electronic
Luz Prado

Voice, Palmas &
Percussion
Lola Dolores

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Director, Dramaturgy,
Performer,
& Choreography
Luz Arcas

Musical Direction &
Composition
Luz Prado

Scenic and Choreography
Assitant
Abraham Gragera

Dramaturgical Assistant
Rafael SM Paniagua

Artistic Assistant
Nino Laisné

Custome Design
Carmen 17

Flag Design
Isa Soto

Lighting
Jorge Colomer

Sound Space
Pablo Contreras

Technical Coordination
Cristina Bolívar

Photography & Video
**Virginia Rota,
Jorge Colomer
y Tristán Pérez Martín**

Graphic Design
María Peinado

Production Design and
Coordination
**Alberto Núñez
Alex Foulkes**

Executive Producer
and Tour Manager
Fernando Jariego

Coproduced by
**El Festival de Otoño
de Madrid**

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“The search for a new language able to mix contemporary dance and flamenco, the virtuous search of a dancer and choreographer who speaks with each fragment of her body and surprises us with symbols taken from the bullfighting and other Spanish traditions”

“In fact you could conceive a whole show out of the movement of Luz Arcas’ feet, since they are the center, the key, and the backbone of her physical score, her atavistic dances, her stage presence”

FIORENZA SAMMARTINO
PERSINSALA



“An hour of pure energy and catharsis in which the artist dances death into a folkloric”

SARA G. CORTIJO.
SIDESOUT





Luz Arcas | La Phármaco

Luz Arcas, winner of Spain's National Dance Award 2024, is a dancer, choreographer and stage director. She holds degrees in choreography from the María de Ávila Conservatory in Madrid and in stage direction from the Royal School of Dramatic Art.

She founded the La Phármaco company in 2009.

Her latest creations are: *Morphine. Lullaby for Emmy Hennings (2026)*, a dance solo with dramaturgy by Pedro G Romero. Fragments of the piece have been shown at the Reina Sofía Museum in Madrid, the Kadist Gallery in Paris and the Bozar in Brussels, and it premiered at the Teatro de la Abadía in Madrid, coproducer of the show.

And *Tierras raras (Rare earths, 2025)*, premiered at the Madrid en danza festival (Teatros del Canal) produced in collaboration with the Mercat de les Flors (Barcelona) and Ma-scène nationale Pays de Montbéliard (France).

She is currently working on the creation of a new piece, *Masa*, for the Compañía Nacional de Danza (Spain),

which is set to premiere at Matadero (Madrid) in May 2026.

Her previous work is collected in two projects: *Bekristen/Tríptico de la Prosperidad (2019-2023)*, consisting of the pieces *La domesticación*, *Somos la guerra* and *La buena obra*, co-produced by the Autumn Festival, the Condeduque Centre for Contemporary Culture, Teatros del Canal in Madrid, the Teatro Central in Seville and the Graner Centre for Contemporary Creation in Barcelona, and *Ciclo de los milagros (2020-2022)*, consisting of the pieces *Toná*, *Trilla* and *Mariana*, the latter co-produced by the Seville Flamenco Biennial, Teatros del Canal in Madrid and Ma-scène nationale Pays de Montbéliard.

She has also choreographed works for the Víctor Ullate Ballet (2018), the National Dance Company of El Salvador (2019 and 2021) and the IPCNA in Peru (2021). She has choreographed the opera *Rigoletto (2023)*, directed by Miguel del Arco and produced by the Teatro Real in Madrid, the Tel Aviv Opera, the ABAO Bilbao Opera and the Teatro de la Maestranza in Seville. She has directed and choreographed the play *Bordo Poniente*, produced by the University and FIL of Guadalajara, the UNAM and the DAJU of Mexico City (Mexico, 2024).

As a stage director, she has created *Todas las santas* (2022), in collaboration with Salvadoran actresses Egly Larreynaga and Alicia Chong, co-produced by the FIT of Cádiz; and *Psicosis 4.48* (2023), co-produced by the Teatro Español in Madrid, for which the protagonist, Natalia Huarte, received the Max Award for Best Female Performance (2024).

She has also carried out artistic projects in India (New Delhi, National School of Drama 2015) and Equatorial Guinea (Malabo, 2015–2016).

She is the author of the book *Pensé que bailar me salvaría* (*I Thought Dancing Would Save Me*), published by Contintametienes, which has just been released in its second edition.

Luz Arcas was awarded the II Godot Prize in 2023 for the best dance work for *Mariana*, and was a finalist for Best Female Dance Performer at the Talía Awards in 2023. She was a finalist at the Max Awards in several categories with *Somos la guerra* in 2022, and for Best Dance Performer with *Kaspar Hauser. El huérfano de Europa* in 2017. She received the El Ojo Crítico de Danza 2015 award and Best Dance Performer at the Lorca Awards that same year. She is the winner of the Injuve 2009 and Málaga Crea 2009 awards.





Contact

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