



## *Antonio Vargas*

**Antonio Vargas** is recognized as one of the world's leading Flamenco dancers and choreographers. Ingenious, innovative and a perfectionist, he performs and teaches internationally, with works for theatre, cinema and television. He is known as a guardian of an esoteric art form that, despite its massive recent popularity, remains elusive to most of those who flock to see it. He is a master of the complex rhythmic syncopations that characterize much of the excitement of Flamenco.

Antonio Vargas won accolades for his performance as the gypsy father, Rico in the Australian box-office hit movie *Strictly Ballroom*, directed by Baz Luhrmann and the winner of the Golden Globe Award and of the Cannes Film Festival Golden Camera Award for Young Directors. More recently he choreographed and staged a Flamenco segment for Tom Cruise's *Mission Impossible II* directed by John Woo. He also played a cameo in this film. Other acting credits include *Time Trax*.

Another important facet of his career is the work he has done in collaboration with orchestras and opera productions, such as Harvey Goldsmith's *Carmen* (Sydney, Melbourne, Zurich and Munich), *Bolero*, *Zapateado*, and *Three Spanish Dances* with the Munich Philharmoniker, *Blood Wedding* for the London Operatic Society and *La Vida Breve*, a Basil Lochart production for the BBC, and recently produced for the Sydney Festival. Antonio has always been a pioneer in the field of Flamenco Dance Theatre. Back in 1962, when he formed his first company, he had already the desire to take Flamenco out of the tight boundaries of the traditional, predictable performances that most audiences were used to; he always believed that Flamenco could lend itself to interpret great novelists and poets and that it could be put on stage side by side with the most established, mainstream art-forms, such as opera and choral works, without jeopardising its authenticity.

Antonio Vargas trained initially in Flamenco with Spain's foremost teacher, Antonio Marin. He went on to perform as a leading dancer in the Pilar Lopez Spanish Dance Company. After two years he was invited to dance in the Rafael de Cordova Dance Company as a lead dancer. Later he formed his own company, The Antonio Vargas Flamenco Dance Theatre. Having seen him perform at the 1973 Edinburgh Festival, eminent Covent Garden dance critic Peter Williams wrote: "He has opened new frontiers of the Flamenco art; he is already the greatest Spanish master of this century". His words have been reiterated with each new work that Antonio Vargas has produced. Throughout his illustrious career he has always found the inspiration to present pieces, which, although they never deviate from the roots and authenticity of Flamenco, are exceptionally contemporary.

Since 2003, Antonio has also been actively involved in introducing and developing the art of Flamenco in SE Asia, including Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, China and Taiwan by conducting workshops and developing projects involving local artists. In addition, he also

conducts educational seminars and lectures on the history and art of Flamenco and Spanish Dance in various art colleges and universities throughout the world. In the last few years, Antonio has concentrated in preparing for a series of Flamenco books and DVDs covering musical structures of the Flamenco repertoire and introducing his novel notation system for the Flamenco dance vocabulary.

He now spends his time between Spain, Australia, SE Asia and North America and continues to promulgate the Spanish-Flamenco culture by exploring his collaboration with other art forms, such as classical ballet and contemporary music.

Some of the events in which he was involved as artistic director were:

***La vida Breve***, Opera, Basil Coleman Production for the BBC - Dance Director.

**Llangollen Festival, Wales** - Co-ordinator, Dance Director.

***The Flamenco High Mass:***

Royal Festival Hall, London - Dance Director, Musical Director.

***Blood Wedding***

The London Operatic Society - Dance Director, Musical Director.

**Medieval Festival of ITA**, Guadalajara, Spain

Co-ordinator, Artistic Director.

**Festivales de España**, Cuervas de Nerjas, Málaga, Spain

Flamenco Program Director.

**AFI Fashion Parade**

Najee Men's Fashion -- Choreographer and Meteur en scène.

***Fiesta, Spanish Festival***

Schloss Kaltenberg, Prince Luitpold of Bavaria - Designer of complete event, Co-ordinator, Choreographer and Artistic Director of Flamenco segment.

***Carmen, Opera***

Harvey Goldsmith Production, Melbourne, Sydney, Zurich, Munich - Artistic Director and Choreographer of Spanish segment.

***Strictly Ballroom, Film***

Choreographic assistance and background on dance from Spain.

***Mission Impossible II, Film***

Material assistance to John Woo, choreography of dance segment.

## **Repertoire**

**La Vida Breve, 1964**

**Juganda del Toro, 1965**

**Fiesta de Andalucía, 1969**

**Misa Flamenca I, 1971**

**Don Quijote, 1978**

**Al Andalus I, 1984**

**Boda de Sangre, 1988**

**Pasión, Gracia y Fuego I, 1989**

**Carmen, 1990**

**Crónica de una Muerte Anunciada, 1990**

**Los Flamencos Somos Así, 1991**

**Sentimientos, 1992**

**Al Andalus II, 1993, 1994**

**Camino Flamenco, 1993**

**El Amor Brujo, 1994**

**Manuel de Falla's "Love and the Magician" is love bewitched.**

**La casa de Bernarda Alba, 1995, 1997**

**Misa Flamenca II, 1995**

**Bolero & Three Spanish Dances, 1995**

**Pasión, Gracia y Fuego II, 1995**

**Fiesta, 1996**

**La Vida Breve, 1997**

**A tribute to Manuel de Falla.**

**Loco, 1997**

**Una Noche Andalusia, 1998**

**An evocation of traditional Spain.**

**Mosaico Flamenco, 2000**

**Laberinto Flamenco, 2001**

**The House Plus, 2001**

# Antonio Vargas - PRESS

"Vargas (...): his lunges cocked tight like a drawn bow, his crossover footwork sewn like perfect stitches, his turns knife-edge smooth." **Washington DC: Washington Post, Oct 1 2002**

Antonio Vargas is the embodiment of the masculine principle, exhibiting the self-control of the virtuoso flamenco dancer. (...) he dances with such volcanic energy (...); (his) fancy footwork (...) is an education." **Dunedin: Listener, Apr 6 2002**

"Riveting flamenco (...)  
An intensely focused performer, (Vargas) can make even minimal movement more expressive than text. (...) a triumph of acting as much it is of dancing."  
**Wellington: The Evening Post, Nov 16 2001**

"Flamenco invigorates (...)  
Dramatic performance (...) in the modern idiom (...), dance of passion (...)."  
**Wellington: The Dominion, Nov 16 2001**

"Vargas rattles those hills with a bravura macho flourish."  
**Sydney: Sydney Morning Herald, Oct 1 2001**

"Dance around the altar  
Connecting Flamenco (...) with other forms of art is an artistic concern of Antonio Vargas - so that it doesn't degenerate into a touristic attraction."  
**Munich: Süddeutsche Zeitung, Jul 7 1995**

"Love and Power.  
Antonio Vargas danced his gipsy-character wonderfully with pride and precision (...)."  
**Munich: Süddeutsche Zeitung, Oct 24 1994**

"Stunning, Spanish sean-nós  
A STANDING ovation, cheering and wild clapping, whistling and stomping greeted Antonio Vargas (...)."  
**Dublin: Evening Post, Oct 5 1991**

"Tale of passion, love, jealousy

Vargas ( ... ) is riveting ( ... ), wild and fiercing, soft and romantic on demand."

Dublin: Evening Herald, Oct 5 1993

"Tapping into history. (...) Vargas, as compelling (...) as he was (...) in the recent hit film *Strictly Ballroom* (...), a concentrated core of power."

London: The Times, Aug 24 1994

Vargas is poetry in motion. (...) I watched spellbound as Strictly Ballroom star Antonio Vargas transformed himself into an aggressive, beautiful, sexually compelling god of dance."

London: Sunday Mail, Apr 25 1993

"This flamenco is strictly live! ( ... ) For one shimmering moment, he is a mirage. A blur of drumming feet and ruffled lace, radiating a staccato clack that resounds around him."

Melbourne: Herald-Sun, Oct 22 1992

"An absolute Master. ( ... ) If there is such a thing is a charismatic performer then Vargas should he so described. His intensity never flagged and if anything his energy increased with each movement."

Sydney: Dance Australia, Apr-May 1990

"A taste of the real, raw flamenco."

Sydney: Sydney Morning Herald, Sep 21 1984

"Flamenco makes those sparks fly.( ... )

Vargas' style is one of force and power (...), he is a master of Zapateado. His intricate interplay of heel and toe taps was a superb virtuoso display of rhythm and percussion."

Sydney: The Australian, Sep 25 1984