



GUIDED TOUR SCRIPT/2015

Administration and Programme schedule

Forecourt

- Welcome to the Solis Theatre. My name is.....and it will be my pleasure to guide you through this visit of the greatest Performing Arts landmark in Uruguay.

The Solis Theatre, a National Heritage building, was first opened in 1856¹ by a limited company. It was created to provide the citizens of Montevideo with a “worthy coliseum” for the Performing Arts. At present, it belongs to Montevideo’s City Hall which acquired it in 1937. This takeover brought about significant changes over the years, in the structural design of the building as well as in the running of the theatre itself, although its essence as a space dedicated to the Arts has always been maintained and it has established itself within the community as a cultural emblem.

The Performing Arts ritual is recreated on a daily basis in this neoclassical style building. This social and cultural-generating factory is deep-rooted in the community and is considered to be living heritage as well as a Heritage monument.

Its tone is solemn and austere despite its monumental structure. The original project was carried out by the Architect Carlos Zuchi², but after changes to the original plan, the construction of the central part began in 1841, based on the design of Architect Francisco Garmendia, who was also responsible for supervising the construction work. The lateral wings were built later on in 1874.

Various historical documents show that the name “Solis” pays tribute to Juan Díaz de Solís, the Spanish traveller who discovered the River Plate in 1516. However, many popular theories have circulated as to the origin of the name being associated with the sun in the frontispiece or to Masonic origins. We must bear in mind that a building of these dimensions, in a city as flat as Montevideo was back then, generated a lot of expectation from the local population as well as from those in the neighbouring shore.

¹ There are several, older theatres in America but of similar size and programme schedule of the same level, there is The Alberto Saavedra Pérez Municipal Theatre in La Paz, Bolivia (1845) with seating capacity for 700 and the Santa Isabel Theatre in Recife, Brazil (1850) with seating capacity for 811. Both are National Heritage buildings in their respective countries.

² The original Project was carried out in 1841 by the architect Carlo Zucchi, who was also responsible for planning the space for Plaza Independencia (Independence Square), connecting the new city with the old. In his honour, the forecourt on Buenos Aires Street is named after him. Due to different political and financial difficulties encountered [in 1839 the Guerra Grande (Great War) had started], the construction itself began in 1841 under the supervision of another architect, Francisco Garmendia. After a long delay due to the siege of Montevideo, during which period the construction materials were saved thanks to the vigilant custody of Juan Manuel Martínez. The construction of the central part culminated in 1856.

In order to unveil the mystery, the doors were opened to the public days before the inaugural event, and an infantry battalion was asked to march through the balconies, aisles and boxes to show how solid the building was.

The date chosen for the inauguration ceremony was the 25th August 1856, coinciding with the celebration of the Declaration of Independence from Spanish dominion. 2500 tickets were sold for 1584 seats for the event. Since that night, the tradition of lighting up the red lantern on the building's roof-top on every exhibition night, has been kept.

The most important renovation ever made to the theatre concluded in 2008. Preference was given to the restoration of heritage elements, the audience's comfort, as well as to creating a more appropriate and safer stage. As a result, a variety of activities such as concerts, plays, dance shows, guided tours, seminars, master classes, workshops, exhibitions, etc, can now take place simultaneously.

The new structure of this cultural centre³ takes up the whole block and consists of 2 stage halls, a Conference and Events hall, a projections hall and an exhibitions hall, where all the exhibits shown are related to the performing arts. There is also a Performing Arts Archive and Research Centre (CIDDAE- Centro de Documentación e Investigación de las Artes Escénicas) which holds a collection available for reference.

Inside the premises there is also a Café, a restaurant, a souvenir shop, and some restricted areas to the public: the admin. offices and the rehearsal rooms for the resident cast: the National Comedy and the Philharmonic Orchestra of Montevideo located on Juncal Street.

A policy of 'democratic access for all' is currently one of the pillars of this institution. Here we produce, promote and spread culture, creating events which the public may enjoy, selecting from a programme of varied styles and costs.

It is the first Latin-American theatre to receive the UNIT recognition for the building's ease-of-access facilities for people with disabilities, these include: a ramp and boxes with wheelchair access, elevators with Braille system controls as well as trained staff to assist blind guests.

In addition, a parallel agenda to the programmed events is scheduled with seminars, talks, workshops, rehearsals, teaching concerts and extended events. These are organized by the Education Department and are aimed at social inclusion, to develop the role of spectator in new audiences as well as to the professional training of artists.

-Please, come in. Welcome.

Hall

³ **Centro Cultural Teatro Solís** (Solís Theatre-Cultural Centre): Total area: 19,500m². Central part: total area: 12,000m². Sala Zavala Muniz: Total area: 350m², maximum capacity: 300 spectators.

Performing Arts were a part of daily life for the people of Montevideo, just like social gatherings, bullfights and cockfights. Therefore, the public (mainly European immigrants), was familiar with theatre performances and enjoyed them; especially operas. That is why the **opera “Ernani” by Giuseppe Verdi** was chosen for the opening night at the Solis Theatre. It was played by Sofia Vera Lorini’s company.

That historic evening culminated at 2 a.m., in party fashion in a room that was beautifully decorated with natural flowers and flags and included the President, Gabriel Pereira, as one of the guests.

In addition to the lyrical performances, another important element in the theatre’s programme, together with dance and symphonic music, is the theatrical play. Two days after the inauguration, a comedy by the national author Francisco Xavier de Acha: **“Oh, qué apuros!!”** was premiered.

Although at the beginning the Solis Theatre was mainly destined for lyrical performances such as the opera, the operetta and the zarzuela, theatre companies frequently performed here, mainly from Italy, France and Spain with world-renowned artists. Actresses like Sarah Bernhardt⁴ visited our city on several occasions, once in 1887, coinciding with the installation of the theatre’s electric lighting system; Maria Guerrero⁵ also visited us several times between 1914 and 1956; Lola Membrives⁶, between 1922 and 1941, and the Italian actress, Eleonora Duse⁷ in 1885.

From 1947 onwards, the core artistic programme consisted of performances by the resident casts: the National Comedy⁸ and the Philharmonic Orchestra of Montevideo⁹.

⁴ **Sarah Bernhardt** was the greatest French theatre and cinema actress of her time. She was born in Paris on 23rd October 1844 and died in the same city on 26th March 1923. She was the rival of Italian actress, Eleonora Duse. Her acting style was natural; she detested the old norms of French theatre, in which actors recited in exaggerated style, making over-the-top gestures. She broke with all the established rules, trying to understand the psychology of characters; she searched for natural perfection without any signs of artificiality. She was also interested in sculpture, painting and wrote 3 books.

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⁵ **María Guerrero** (Madrid 17th April 1867 – 23rd January 1928) was a Spanish, theatrical actress, daughter of a theatre impresario. She perfected her technique under Coquelin and Sarah Bernhardt in Paris. She started her own company and became the owner of the Teatro Español (Spanish Theatre), which today carries her name. She was part of the project to open the Teatro Cervantes in Buenos Aires.

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⁶ **Dolores Membrives Fernández**, known as Lola Membrives (Buenos Aires 26th June 1888 – 31st October 1969) was an Argentinian actress, based in Spain. She interpreted dramatic and comedy roles from the most varied authors, and toured successfully around Spain and Latin America. Some of the most distinguished playwrights of the first half of the 20th Century wrote roles especially for her. Along with María Teresa Montoya and Margarita Xirgu, she was one of the principal actresses of the theatre of Federico García Lorca. Her last performance was in the Teatro Odeón in Buenos Aires.

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⁷ **Eleonora Duse** (Pavia 1858-Pittsburg 1924) was the most famous Italian theatre actress of the end of the 19th Century and beginning of 20th Century. She was nicknamed “La Divina” and was the counterpart of the French actress, Sarah Bernhardt, the two most famous theatre actresses of all time. A rivalry between them was suggested but their styles were very different. Eleonora tried to understand the state-of-mind of the character, while Sarah stamped her characters with her personal touch. She was famous for her interpretation of roles by the Norwegian writer Henrik Ibsen as well as the classics. She was succeeded by other great tragic actresses, the Spanish Margarita Xirgu and Lola Membrives.

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⁸ **Comedia Nacional** (National Comedy) See Appendix II

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⁹ **Orquesta Filarmónica de Montevideo** (Montevideo Philharmonic Orchestra). See Appendix IV.

In 1949, the Dramatic Arts Municipal School (Escuela Municipal de Arte Dramático) was opened, led by the famous Catalan actress Margarita Xirgu¹⁰. It was housed in the theatre's west wing for years but is currently based in its new premises in Mercedes Street.

Lyrical performances were not restricted to the annual opera peak seasons; the operetta and the zarzuela also lured in huge audiences. Important figures of the genre performed the best known titles here: "La verbena de la paloma", "Luisa Fernanda", "La Tempestad" and "El anillo de hierro", to name a few.

The soprano Maria Barrientos¹¹ performed here in 1901, and the company directed by the famous Italian maestro Arturo Toscanini¹², did so during the opera season of 1903 along with the renowned Italian tenor Enrico Caruso¹³ and 285 members.

After the First World War (1914-1918), the great lyrical seasons began to wane until they almost disappeared in the 1940's. This coincided with a profitability loss of the theatre's shareholders, due to the newfound uses of free time, which drove the population to discover other recreational options: radio-theatre and cinema.

In the 20th century, our country begins to form a national identity around theatre, academic music and popular music. It is at this time that the work of national artists: the

¹⁰ **Margarita Xirgu (Molins de Rei)** (18th June 1888 – Montevideo 25th April 1969) Revered Catalan actress, known as Margarita or simply as "La Xirgu", she was much more to Uruguay than the favourite actress of Federico García Lorca, she was committed to and greatly influenced Uruguayan theatre. She had toured around several Central and South American cities and at the end of her fourth tour, she set up residence in Uruguay, where she became a citizen. She worked here as an actress, director and teacher until she retired to Punta Ballena, Maldonado where she died in 1969. Her fame and success was shared since she modernised the stage, apart from the prompter's box she also got rid of heavy set designs in painted cardboard and floating scenery "flats". Simple designs were enough to decorate a scene. At a time when the fashion was to fill the stage with useless objects, this was revolutionary. Margarita was one of those rare people that could imagine the scenery and stage management solutions, while reading a play. For more information: www.teatrosolis.org.uy/ CIDDAE/ Exposiciones/ La Xirgu

¹¹ **Maria Barrientos** (Barcelona 1884 - Ciboure, 1946) Spanish soprano. Her voice, though not exceedingly strong, had such excellent tone and projection that she immediately became the most sought after soprano of her time. She sang *The Barber of Seville* by Rossini in Covent Garden, London and *Dinorah* by Meyerbeer in la Scala de Milán, she sang *Lucia de Lamermoor* by Donizetti at the Metropolitan of NY, theatre to which she was linked from 1916 to 1919 where she sang all the romantic repertoire for "Soprano leggero" (type of soprano voice). She also performed in many concert tours, especially around France and South America, where she built her career and made a big part of her fortune.

¹²

12 Arturo Toscanini: (Parma 25th March 1867- 16th January 1957) Italian musician, considered by many contemporary critics, colleagues and public in general, as the greatest orchestra director of his time. He was famous for his brilliant rigour, his relentless perfectionism, his prodigious hearing and his photographic memory which enabled him to correct errors made by orchestra members. He was opposed to the fascist regimes in Germany and Italy so he left Europe and went to the US, where in 1937 the NBC Symphonic Orchestra was founded. He was well-known for his interpretations of Beethoven and Verdi.

¹³ **13 Enrico Caruso** (Naples, 25th February 1873- 2nd August 1921) was one of the most famous tenors in the world, in the history of opera and for many, he was the best. He was also the most popular singer of any genre during the first 20 years of the 20th Century and he was the first vocalist in history to ever record songs. He sang in many of the most important opera houses in the world, including the Teatro San Carlo (Naples), La Scala (Milan), Teatro Colón (Bs As), Covent Garden (London) although he is more well-known for being the first tenor at the Metropolitan Opera in New York for 17 years. The Italian orchestra director, Arturo Toscanini, who directed some of the operas in which Caruso sang at the Metropolitan, considered him as one of the greatest artists he had worked with.

dramaturge Florencio Sanchez¹⁴, the composer Eduardo Fabini¹⁵ and tango composers such as Roberto Firpo¹⁶ begin to emerge.

Tango¹⁷: original and authentic cultural expression of the River Plate, declared Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by the UNESCO, was also present at the Solis Theatre. Carlos Gardel, “*el zorzal criollo*” (*thrush, a song bird*) or “*el mago*” (*the magician*) gave various recitals in the 1920’s. The public’s euphoria was such that additional shows had to be presented.

-If you come with me, we’ll move on to the Foyer on the 2nd floor.

Climbing the stairs

On the way there I invite you to take a look at the photo gallery, the current exhibit, called “.....” is organized by the Municipal Centre of Photography (CMDP) and the CIDDAE.

Foyer

The Foyer is the “Intermission” Hall, also known as the “golden room” in many theatres around the world. It is currently used to celebrate the toast for protocol events.

Considered as one of the oldest, top level theatres in America with permanent activity, the Solis Theatre was and continues to be a space dedicated to national authors. However, a number of events took place here, which were not linked to the theatre’s original purpose.

For example, the inauguration of the first Fine Arts Hall on 25th August 1937, a political party congress (for the Partido Colorado) where the election formula (Amézaga-Guani) was announced on 21st October 1942, as well as literary contests, graduation ceremonies, carnival shows and even funeral wakes or vigils for famous people linked to national culture like the dramaturge, Florencio Sánchez and years later, the National Comedy actor, Enrique Guarnero¹⁸.

¹⁴ **Florencio Sánchez** was a prominent figure in theatre in the region of the River Plate, Uruguayan dramaturge and journalist, author of “Barranca abajo”, “M’hijo el doctor” and “Canillita”. He was born in Montevideo on 17th January 1875 and died in Milan (Italy) on 7th November 1910. The day of his death was chosen to commemorate the “Día del Canillita” (Day of the Newspaper street vendor).

¹⁵ **Eduardo Fabini** is acclaimed as being the highest and most laudable artist of Uruguayan classical music, he initiated a music orientation which blended tones and melodies from national folkloric music into classical music forms and obtained exquisite, refined expressions of incredible inspiration and great musical sensibility. He was born on 18th May 1882 in Solís de Mataojo. He composed: “*Tristes*” “*Intermedios*”, “*Estudio arpegiano*” for piano, and the chorus: “*Las flores del campo*”, “*Campo*”, his first symphonic poem; musical compositions which evoke sounds and the mood of the Uruguayan countryside; “*La isla de los ceibos*”, fantasies for violin and orchestra; a ballet piece based on the storyline of a play by Fernán Silva Valdés, called “*Mburucuyá*”, the symphonic square “*Molga*”, and the children’s ballet “*Mañana de Reyes*”. In 1927 he was named “Agregado Artístico” in the Uruguayan Embassy in the U.S. he died in May 1950.

¹⁶ **Roberto Firpo**, (Buenos Aires 13th May 1884 – 14th June 1969) outstanding tango musician who worked as a pianist, orchestra director and composer. He was one of the first musicians to renovate tango from its primitive form and who implemented the use of the piano in the typical tango orchestra. He also composed the music for various movies. His emblematic tango is “Alma de bohemio”. He debuted the most famous Uruguayan tango “La Cumparsita” at Café La Giralda by Gerardo Matos Rodríguez in 1916.

¹⁷ **Tango**- see Appendix II

¹⁸ **Enrique Guarnero**, National Comedy actor.

Variety shows were also popular with audiences; where tango repertoires, magic shows and circus acts were staged as part of one show.

In the 1920's, a performance genre which united elite and popular culture reached its climax: the "troupes", performed by university students. During the Spring Feast (Fiesta de la Primavera), students organized the troupes by reinterpreting and performing a theatre play, adding music and humour to it. These parodies generally portrayed the "alter egos" of big stage stars of the time such as dancers, actresses, actors and singers. The most remembered one is the "Troupe Jurídica Ateniense" that debuted at the Solis Theatre on 22nd September 1922, earning the applause of a very enthusiastic audience. The "tribu" from the Architecture Department of the University and the "Troupe jurídica" from the Law School were also well-known.

In an important theatre such as this, dance performances could not be absent. There have been numerous companies and stars, for example Ana Pavlova's¹⁹ company, Sergei Diaghilev's²⁰ Russian Ballets, the Catalan dancer Tortola Valencia²¹ an icon of Modern Dance and Jose Limon's²² company, among others.

Ever since the reopening of the theatre in 2004, the Solis has worked together with artists, producers, cultural institutions and their peers in the region, and through this collaboration has been able to act as part of a team, to coordinate shows, activities and tours, thus enabling the theatre to define its core programme: **the Dance Season, the Opera Season, the Theatre Season, the Symphonic Music Cycles** (jazz or popular) and **the Children's Season**.

The Solis, like all lyrical theatres around the world, currently has the support of private businesses that sponsor and contribute with a fundamental financial contribution to cover the costs.

In this period we have been visited by well-known artists as well as classical and contemporary international ballet companies such as: the Contemporary Ballet company of Teatro San Martín, the Argentinian Ballet directed by Julio Bocca, the Santiago Municipal Ballet and the Chilean National Ballet, from Brazil we've had: Grupo Corpo, Ballet Stagium, Deborah Colker's Company and the Cisne Negro Company (Black Swan Company), also, the Spanish National Dance Company directed by Nacho Duato, Teresa Carreño's Ballet Theatre from Venezuela, el Balletto dell'esperia from Italy, which together with national artists make up **The Dance Season**.

¹⁹ **Ana Pavlova** (San Petersburg, Russia, 1881 – The Hague, Netherlands 1931) was a member of the Russian Ballet; she danced in a world tour with Serge de Diaghilev. In 1911 she created her own company in which she became known for her choreographies of the classical romantic ballets like 'Giselle'. Her most important role was "The Dying Swan".

²⁰ **Serge de Diaghilev** (Gruzino, Russia 1872 – Venice, Italy 1929) Theatre impresario, artistic director and critic of Russian art. See Appendix III

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²¹ **Tórtola Valencia** (Seville, Spain 1882 – Barcelona, Spain 1955) was a renowned Spanish dancer whose characteristic style of expressing emotion through movements, inspired many other dancers, like Isadora Duncan. She specialised in oriental dances, she was particularly interested in African, Arabic and Indian dances, on which she based some choreographies taking the field of anthropology to dance. She was a pioneer along with others, in the Women's Liberation Movement. She had love affairs with the celebrities of her time due to her great beauty; for which she received the title of the most beautiful woman in Europe of her time. She performed in all of Europe, South America, North America and Asia.

²² ²² **José Limón** (Culiacán, Mexico 1908 – 1972) was a dancer, dance teacher and choreographer; he was a precursor of modern dance as well as creator of choreography techniques which are still in use today which highlight the male figure in dance. He studied in New York and in 1946 established his own dance company in the U.S. The Compañía de Danza José Limón was the first to go on tour in Europe.

The Opera Season is today the fruit of a long, intense and costly co-production, which involves the whole Solis team, the Philharmonic Orchestra of Montevideo, national and foreign artistic and technical professionals, (stage and musical direction, singing, dance, set design, costumes, lighting, props, make-up, hair, etc.), art students and teachers, etc.

A vital strategy in planning the opera programme has been to work in conjunction with other lyrical theatres in the region to share resources (set design, costumes and props), currently in place by signed agreement with the Teatro Colon of Buenos Aires, the Teatro Argentino of La Plata or the Teatro Municipal of Santiago (Chile) among others.

The Solis Theatre offers many ways of getting close to the opera: attending dress-rehearsals, which is encouraged by the Culture Department of the City Hall (IMM) for art students, watching DVD versions of montages carried out here and in other stages, a high-definition projection of the opera season of the Metropolitan Opera House of New York, conferences and courses.

The opera titles presented to this day are: La Boheme, La Traviata, Tosca, Nabucco, Il Trovatore, Rigoletto, Carmen, Mdme Butterfly, The Barber from Sevilla, and this year we will be showing Lucia de Lamermoor by G. Donizetti and Figaro´s Weddings by W.A. Mozart.

The Theatre Season includes performances in both stages by our resident cast: the National Comedy and performances by famous foreign companies, actors, actresses and directors, for example: Mauricio Kartun, Claudio Tolcachir, Rafael Spregelburd and Daniel Veronese from Argentina, La Zaranda and the Compañía Nacional de Teatro Clásico de España (National Classical Theatre Company from Spain) and performances by the Teatro Independiente Nacional (National Independent Theatre).

The Symphonic Music Season offers performances by our second resident cast: the Philharmonic Orchestra of Montevideo; the concert cycle for season ticket holders from the Centro Cultural de Música (Music Cultural Centre); and other foreign top-level orchestras and artists which tour around the region. We have welcomed the Salzburg Academic Camerata, the Saint Petersburg Symphonic Orchestra, the Berlin Orchestra and even the Maestro Zubin Metha conducting the Philharmonic Orchestra of Israel, the Argentinian Daniel Bareinboim directing the Orchestra of Palestinian and Israeli Youths, the San Pablo Philharmonic Orchestra, the Dresden Symphonic Orchestra, among many others.

Other musical expressions, such as jazz, rock, folkloric music and popular music (national as well as international) are also part of the Solis' programme. The long list of artists that have played here include: the Virtuoso Andres Segovia, Paco de Lucia, Egberto Gismonti and Niño Josele, the incomparable talent of Chic Corea and Richard Bona, Brazilian musicians such as Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Joao Bosco, Chico Cesar and Lenine, Argentinian musicians such as Mariano Otero, Fito Paez, Liliana

Herrero and Luis Alberto Spinetta as well as noted national musicians such as Los Shakers, Totem, Alfredo Zitarrosa, Jaime Roos, Fernando Cabrera, Eduardo Darnauchans, Daniel Viglietti, Pitufo Lombardo, El Sabalero, Larbannois y Carrero, to name a few.

At the end of the year, both the Jazz Tour and the IMM (City Hall) organize the “Jazz de Montevideo” (Montevideo Jazz Festival); the cultural centre then hosts shows and carries out teaching workshops led by famous guest musicians; an aspect of our professional training which is highly valued by our artists.

-Now we'll go down and head to the auditorium.

Auditorium (or House)

The style is typical of a theatre design called “*alla italiana*”, it's in the shape of a horseshoe, and consists of 5 rings (circles or tiers) that surround the orchestra stalls: the lower boxes (stalls circle), dress circle (royal circle), the upper circle (grand circle), the gallery (balcony) and the gods.

The stage is raised with respect to the seating area (stalls) and the lateral and back walls are closed so that just one plane of vision is perceived by the audience.

The velvet front curtain (*also known as: grand drape, main rag, front act, main traveller, tabs, act curtain, house curtain or house drape*) and valance work as a barrier to separate the spectators from the mystery backstage. The main colours used to decorate the auditorium are ivory, beige, burgundy and gold; colours which suggest elegance, good taste and refinement.

In addition to what happens onstage, the most seductive feature in this hall is undoubtedly the *plafond*²³, created by the artists Carlos Maria Herrera from Uruguay and Pio Collivadino from Argentina.

Seated on these stalls, audiences have enjoyed a wide range of performances, from 1947 when The National Comedy started, with Margarita Xirgu, Alberto Candreau, Enrique Guarnero, Juan Jones, Walter Vidarte, the young China Zorrilla and Estela Medina as members of the original cast. Imagine the public's enthusiasm when they saw

²³ **Plafond** See Appendix I.

the great Italian actor Vittorio Gassman²⁴, Marcel Marceau²⁵ himself, the dancers: Jorge Donn²⁶, Rudolf Nureyev²⁷, and Alicia Alonso²⁸ also from this very spot.

During the First World War, many charity shows were held here, one of the highlights was in 1917 when two very prestigious artists: Arthur Rubinstein²⁹ and Vaslav Nijinski³⁰, joined their grace and genius to raise funds for the Anglo-French Red Cross.

The best European theatre companies have come to this theatre: the Italian, Spanish, French and Russian, among others. Many stayed in our country for long periods of time, some stayed for up to 80 days.

-Let's move towards the stage.

Pit

This black sector on the ground is a moving platform that has 3 different positions: when it is lowered, it becomes the orchestra pit; when it is raised it widens the area of the stage; or it can remain at the same level as the stalls. The first 3 rows of seats can be

24

²⁴ **Vittorio Gassman** (Genoa, Italy 1922 – Rome, Italy 2000). Popularly known as; "Il Mattore", he was a cinema actor and director, considered to be among the best Italian actors of all time. He studied acting in Accademia Nazionale d'Arte Drammatica. He debuted in Milan in 1942 with the theatre play "Nemica" (Enemy). He interpreted the classics like Shakespeare and Dostoyevsky. He made movies in Hollywood, and was awarded the prize Principe de Asturias de las Artes in 1997.

²⁵ **Marcel Marceau** (Strasbourg, France 1923 – Cahors, France 2007), mime and actor. He began his career in Germany, performing for the French occupying troops after the 2nd World War. He studied acting in the Sarah Bernhardt Theatre in Paris. He created one of the most dearly loved characters of all time: "Bip" with whom he became famous and won the title of the best mime in the world.

²⁶ **Jorge Donn** (Bs.As Argentina 1947 – Lausanne, Switzerland 1992). He began dancing when he was 4 years old and studied in the Escuela del Teatro Colón. In 1963 he moved to Brussels where he joined Maurice Bejart's Company, he quickly became the principal figure. In 1979, he interpreted *El bolero*, for the first time, a ballet which had been created for a woman. Many of Bejart's work were created especially for him. From 1976 he was artistic director of the *Ballet del Siglo XX*. In 1988 he created his own company *L'Europa Ballet* which lasted only a short time. In 1989, he was nominated by the Konex foundation as one of the best dancers.

²⁷ **Rudolf Nureyev** (Irktusk, Russia 1938 – France 1993) recognized as the best classical dancer of all time. He was born on a train near Irktusk during a trip his mother was making to Vladivostok. His dance studies began in 1955 in the Institute of Choreography of Vaganova, a dependency of the Kirov Ballet in Leningrad. In 1961 he stood in for the principal dancer of the Russian Ballet in Paris due to an injury and received great praises from the critics. From that moment on, he never returned to Russia. He was sought after by the most famous film-makers due to his talent and growing World Wide fame. He was part of the London Royal Ballet. In 1983 he was named Director of the Paris Opera Ballet. He was extremely temperamental and contradictory. He rubbed shoulders with people like the Onassis and M. Jagger, among others. His performances and choreographies have become "mythical" having received awards like the highest French cultural award: Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters. He died months later of AIDS in 1993.

28

²⁸ **Alicia Alonso** (Havana Cuba 1920 – 2009) Prima Ballerina Assoluta del Ballet Nacional de Cuba, she was a Cuban dancer and choreographer. She is considered a legend for her famous interpretations of "Giselle" and "Carmen" as well as other great classical and romantic roles. She began her ballet studies in the Cuban Sociedad Pro-Arte Musical, they continued in New York in the American Ballet Theatre School and then with Vera Volkova in London. She danced in the American Ballet, the Russian Ballet, the Bolshoi, the Paris Opera Ballet, the Royal Danish Ballet and of course in the Cuban National Ballet.

²⁹ **Arthur Rubinstein** (Łódź, Poland 1887 – Geneva, Switzerland 1982) was a famous pianist; particularly well-known for his interpretations of Chopin, his unmistakable sound, his reputation as a pleasure-seeker, enjoying the "joie de vivre". Thomas Mann labelled him the "happy virtuoso". He began his music studies at the age of 3 and gave his first public concert when he was 6. He spoke 8 languages and played in concerts all over the World. Due to his Jewish origin, he never played in Germany again after 1914. He received numerous prizes including one from his personal friend, the King of Spain, Don Alfonso, who awarded him La Gran Cruz de la Orden Civil de Alfonso X El Sabio in 1963. He suffered from progressive blindness, which led him to abandon music, but he was hallowed in history as one of the greatest interpreters of all time.

³⁰ **Vaslav Nijinski** (Kiev, Russia 1890 – London, England 1950) was one of the most gifted dancers in history, and became famous for his talent and for the depth and strength of his roles. He was capable of executing an "en pointe", a rare skill among dancers of that time and his ability to make jumps which seemed to defy gravity were also legendary. In 1900 he joined the Imperial Ballet School and at 18, he was already getting the main roles. He was Sergei Diaghilev's lover and thus became a member of his company, obtaining the principal roles next to Anna Pavlova. Nijinsky created revolutionary movements in his performances, steering clear of the traditional flowing movements prevalent in Ballet at that time. His radical, angular movements with sexually charged suggestions caused scandal. He was married in Buenos Aires on one of his tours to the Hungarian Countess Romola, arousing his mentor's jealousy, who shot them both. He survived but in 1919, had a nervous break-down, putting an end to his career as schizophrenia set in. He was confined to an institution in Switzerland, his wife took care of him for the rest of his days, which he spent going in and out of mental hospitals and asylums.

dismantled for specific stage scenery requirements; therefore the theatre's capacity³¹ can vary.

Stage

Among the many, almost incredible stories in Uruguayan history, wars are a source of anecdotes and interesting facts, the theatre has had its share of them, too. At the beginning of the military period, during the Paraguay War in 1865, the theatre's safety was at risk when it had to be used as a war hospital for the wounded, so sick rooms and a kitchen were needed. Thanks to the theatre owners' quick-thinking, a metallic room was built in one night, to be used as a kitchen and thus avoid risk of fire. This happened here, underneath the old stage; the old stage floor is now kept in the Carnival Museum as national heritage.

The biggest investment made during the last renovation of the theatre, was on the stage and although the audience can't appreciate its full extent from their seats, they still enjoy the results. It now has 80% more floor space and 100% more volume.

The Solis Theatre's technical team (Audio and Video, Machinery and Lighting) are responsible for setting up all the equipment needed for the performances.

Audio-visual Technical Equipment

In 2008 the Solis Theatre received a donation from the Japanese Embassy, which improved its sound and video technical possibilities. They donated an audio console and video equipment with microphones, cameras (like the one between the official boxes) and monitors that were installed in the dressing rooms, the booths and corridors for technicians.

Depending on the needs of each artist, the performances shown here use fixed audio equipment³² and other elements. The sound is usually controlled from the technical booth situated in the gallery, but there are exceptions since for some musical performances the console is placed on lower box N°2. From there, it's easier to follow the rhythm and thus attend to the artists' needs.

For some musical performances such as choirs, symphonic orchestras and chamber music concerts, the acoustic box is frequently mounted, so as to amplify the sound.

During the orchestra season, a camera and monitors are installed in the orchestra pit, to enable the singers and choir to see the director.

Stage Equipment

When we talk about the **stage** we are referring to its three levels: the stage and wings, the lower stage and the stage machinery and equipment: (bridges, grid, the fly system, the rigging) which are what we see above the stage.

³¹ The theatre has a seating capacity for 1250. However, the space available for the performances varies according to whether the performance is visual or musical.

³² The fixed audio equipment consists of a digital console and loudspeakers. The loudspeakers for high tones and medium tones are located in the columns to the sides of the opening of the stage and the ones for grave (low) sounds are found in the "avant scene" boxes.

The stage is 21m in depth by 12m wide. The lateral areas of the stage are called the wings.

On floor -1, we have the entrance to the lower stage and the orchestra pit.

Inside the lower stage we find the technical rooms and the access to the trap-doors. Thirty trap-doors were built on this stage measuring 1.20m² each.

The **leg curtains** are vertical and separated by a few meters from each other and together with the border curtains (**teasers**), prevent the public from seeing the bars, lighting artefacts, as well as props and parts of the set design not used for that scene.

The **border curtains** (teasers) are horizontal curtains located above the stage, which together with other vertical drapes, full-width or bi-parting (split in the middle), all made in black fabric; jointly create the **masking** (black box or stage blacks).

The **valance** is the red curtain found in front of the **main curtain** (*also known as: grand drape, front act, main traveller, tabs, act curtain, main rag, house curtain or house drape*), hung in the same position as the border curtains. The grand drape is made from velvet and can be opened towards the sides (American style) or pulled up vertically ('guillotine' reveal), according to the requirements of each performance.

On the lateral sides of the stage we find the **tormentors**, these together with the valance, are used to regulate the size of the visible stage

We also find platforms of various sizes and heights on the stage area which are used to build the set and create different levels on the stage, according to requirements for each show.

At the top of the scenic tower we find seven technical bridges and the grid. Forty battens controlled by computer system (which determines speed and height), support the lighting and set design pieces. 32 battens which can hold up to 450kg each are used to hang the border curtains, leg curtains and set pieces. The remaining eight are used for lighting.

As well as the computerized system, traditional systems are also used, including ropes, wooden battens and reels, using techniques dating back to the Renaissance period (or to earlier times) which have not outlived their usefulness in theatres.

At the back of the stage we can place a **backdrop** (or backcloth) (10m x 9m) or the **cyclorama** which is a white screen used by some stage professionals, to help set the stage mood. Lights of different shapes and colours are projected onto this screen. Both serve to determine the depth of the stage.

The screen used to show the MET performances, placed at the fore-front of the stage (down-stage), uses a high-definition projector (HD) and operates from behind the screen by a process called rear or retro-projection.

Lighting Equipment

There are approximately 400 spots, artefacts or spotlights and 3 lightning consoles in the theatre.

The lighting is set up especially for each performance according to the indications and requirements of each director or lighting expert.

The spots are placed on the 8 fixed beams which can only move vertically and can hold up to 1000kg; their height is regulated by the control system. More lights can be added, if needed and off-stage, in the gods (highest level), we have follow spots which allow us to follow the actor with a spotlight.

We have “ellipsoidal reflectors” that permit greater lighting control, the “S4 PAR” (commonly used in rock concerts because they provide strong light), the “colour scrollers” (which allow to change colours and are located in front of the lights), the robotic lights (which project different colours and shapes), “Fresnel” artefacts (which allow us to create very soft beams of light), and “asymmetrical panoramas” (similar to halogen quartz lamps), which emit “open” light and are mainly used to illuminate the background.

The new stage was put to the test with two performances played by the resident casts: “1001 nights” by the National Comedy and “La Boheme”, with which the Solis re-established its tradition of presenting operas.

Since the reopening in 2004, with great excitement and joy, national and foreign artists have been presented here. Here are some examples: Jorge Drexler, Pepe Guerra, Daniel Viglietti, Mario Benedetti, Jaime Roos, Malena Muyala, Opa, Adriana Varela, Atilio Stampone, Norma Aleandro, Les Luthiers, Ismael Serrano, La Orquesta de Tango de la ciudad de Buenos Aires (Tango orchetra of Buenos Aires), the De Profundis choir, Hermeto Pascoal, Joan Manuel Serrat, Julio Bocca, Maria Ricetto, etc.

Dressing Rooms

There are four modules on either side of the main stage with adjacent rooms for storage, catering and other services. These dressing rooms are for the main stage as well as the Zavala Muñiz hall, and the floors are connected by large elevators (lifts).

-If you'd be so kind as to follow me, we'll now go to the Zavala Muñiz Hall

Zavala Muñiz Hall

This is a multi-purpose hall that can fit 300 spectators. Its design is known as a “**black box theatre**”, it has **telescopic bleachers** that allow for different seating arrangements; frontal, bi-frontal or circular, and it’s equipped with the latest scenery technology.

It was inaugurated with the play “Detras del Olvido” by the national author Leonardo Preziosi, played by the National Comedy.

We have presented all types of shows here, from every field of the performing arts, including experimental theatre. The programme for this hall aims at the audience’s interaction with innovative artists; we aspire to break psychological barriers regarding what is “different” and at the same time, provide freshness to the programme of the cultural centre.

Children have always been a part of the Solis Theatre. This administration reclaims this idea and manifests it in both halls with the **Children’s Season**. We’ve scheduled several shows for this year: a musical performance of “Ruperto Rocanol” based on the story by Roy Berocay and in the main hall we’ll be showing “Kaami” by Bosquimanos Koryak and “Cata” by Titeres Girasol y la Gotera, at the same time.

Some of the artists who have performed in this hall are: Luciano Supervielle, Fernando Santullo, (Peyote Asesino vocalist), Carlos Casacuberta, Gabo Ferro, Juan Ravioli, Ximena Sariñana, etc. We also had national contemporary dance performances as well as Independent theatre.

The great actor Robert Jones chose the Zavala Muñiz hall to celebrate his retirement from the stage, with the play “La Memoria de Borges” by Hugo Burel. He had a long and renowned career in national theatre and those special, emotive nights will always be remembered by those present.

The price of the tickets for the theatre depends on many factors: the characteristics of the performance, where the company is from, the production costs, the location, etc. It’s important to highlight that the ticket prices for performances by our resident casts are accessible, as it should be for a public company. Also, activities related to developing audience enjoyment within the “Solis Audience Training Programme” (Programa de Formación de Públicos del Solís) including: concerts, rehearsals, extended events, etc. are free. Similarly, if we establish an agreement with the respective producers, we can also offer lower prices to students for some performances.

-On floor level -1 we find the Exhibition Hall which at the moment is showing, we also find the Projection Hall and the CIDDAE there.

Performing Arts Archive and Diffusion Centre

(Centro de Documentación y Difusión de la Artes escénicas - CIDDAE).

This centre is dedicated to the conservation, classification, digitalization and diffusion of the collection of contemporary and historical material from the different artistic disciplines that the Solis Theatre promotes as well as from part of the performing arts activities in Montevideo. The new facilities allow researchers and the interested public at large, to access this information easily.

From here you can get to the Exhibition Hall directly, where workshops, courses, etc. take place, and the Projection Hall which can fit 30 spectators.

Finally, we would like to inform you that on 25th August 2008, the **Friends of the Solis Theatre Foundation** was created, funded by private companies, businesses and individuals, with the primary objective of generating a platform for artistic and cultural development in Uruguay.

As you may have noticed, some tango characters have been accompanying us along the tour. They are interpreted by professional artists, graduated from the EMAD and the EMM.

We thank you for this visit and hope to see you again in the future, since the best way to enjoy the Solis Theatre is to view a performance with artists onstage.

We have a book for you to leave your comments about the tour if you wish, as well as anecdotes you may have about the theatre, and want to share with us.

In the current scheduled programme, we have:
Tickets are on sale in the ticket booth or through the "Red UTS". You can access the Theatre's programme, images and photographs through our website: www.teatrosolis.org.uy, and you can also make enquiries by telephone on: 1950 1856

Appendix

I) Plafond

Painted in 1901 by the artists Carlos Maria Herrera and Pio Collivadino, we can analyze two aspects: the technique and its global composition.

Technique

Oil and tempera on canvas nailed onto a wooden structure. The proscenium arch design, with characteristics which are clearly pictorial is made in oil paint; the rest is based on typical elements of decorative art, and carried out using tempera paint.

Global composition

There are no records as to the meaning of this painting; but some conclusions can be drawn, taking into account the artists' background, their other works of art and the different composition elements of the piece itself.

The Proscenium Arch- is the work of Carlos Maria Herrera; it is based on Greek temple classical architecture. With elements from classical Greek art, neoclassical and romantic styles, this space (which has been through alterations) is used as a frame to depict heroic scenes.

It is a great mythological allegory, at the centre, we see elevated figures: the winged horse and the Gods. We see Apollo, God of the Arts, playing his lyre, offering the wonder which will take place in the theatre to his father Zeus. All this occurs against an Olympic landscape, in the Heavens, amongst the clouds.

The horse is a strong symbolic figure in every culture for its speed, movement and notion of transformation. In this case Pegasus, the winged steed of the muses, symbolizes Theatre Arts' ephemeral nature.

To the left we can see fawns celebrating the "dithyramb" paying tribute to Dionysus, a fertility deity; these celebrations took place during the field harvests and are considered to be the direct precursor of Greek theatre.

In a third plane, we see darker figures in a triumphant parade, dancing to the sound of trumpets, celebrating the triumph of ideal love, the type of love we see in almost every tragedy or comedy such as Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Isolde, Calixto and Melibea and all the universal embodiments of love in drama. In this case the happy couple, sheltered underneath Pegasus' wing, were given a hand by Cupid, who attentively watches the results of his work.

The rest of the Plafond painting consists of typical elements of the decorative arts.

The predominant shape is the circle, which from an architectural as well as an artistic composition point of view is very harmonious and powerful given its perfect shape and all its points being equidistant from its centre.

Placed in circular fashion, we find another important feature: the masks inspired on Greco-Latin style, which represent human emotions. In the expressions of the 11 masks we see laughter, weeping, apathy, the subtle glance, not looking (the absence of a gaze), fear; among others; the range of real feelings that the characters go through in the stories told onstage.

The two masks on the proscenium arch represent tragedy and comedy, the symbols of theatre from its origin in Greece.

Another feature of the design to take into account is the presence of graphic signs. In the centre we see the names of dramatists and composers linked to European movements in theatre and music, and who today are undoubtedly considered to be "classical greats". We can also see elements which reinforce the identity of the building such as the Solis Theatres' initials, the year 1956 in Roman numerals, the tragedy and comedy masks (symbols of the dramatic arts) and dozens of musical instruments that complete the design.

II) Tango

Tango is one of the most genuine and original cultural expressions of the River Plate. It's a very unique artistic expression where music, poetry and dance mingle to define an identity, a way of looking at life from particular space (the city) and a time (the end of the 19th century and all of the 20th century). In 2009 it was included in the UNESCO list of **Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**.

This genre is the product of various socio-cultural circumstances converging; immigration being the main factor in its birth and development. In the last decades of the 19th century, the cities of Montevideo, Buenos Aires and Rosario experienced massive immigration, mainly from Europe, which transformed these societies since the immigrants outnumbered the local population of the time. Tango was born out of the biological and cultural blending of the afro and 'criollo' (locally born people mainly of Spanish descent) populations (the image of the 'payador' (improvised folklore music gaucho singer) is very similar to the tango singer) with the massive immigration from Europe, where tango takes its instruments from. The transition is thought to have taken 40 years until it became a genre in its own right in the last decade of the 19th century.

Tango was born in the 'arrabal' (neighbourhood), where the newcomers lived, and from there spread to encompass all the working classes of the time.

Tango is usually interpreted by an "orquesta típica" (8-12 musicians) or a sextet and the 'bandoeón' (large accordion) is identified as its principal instrument. The musical composition of tango has been through a process of change over time and today we have different fusion styles with recent musical genres (like electronic music).

The dance is characterized by its sensuality and complexity. The choreography begins with the embrace of the couple; and comes from other pre-existing country dances of the River Plate which were modified and became town dances (La habanera cubana, la polca, etc).

Tango was originally only instrumental music intended to be danced, with time it incorporated song, almost always a soloist, eventually also duets, but a distinction between instrumental tangos and sung tangos was maintained. The lyrics generally talk about the 'arrabal' (poor neighbourhoods), disillusion in love, the passing of time, etc.; the feelings of a social group or community that found no other way of expressing them. Its language is the "lunfardo" (slang) a linguistic style with an exaggerated speech (including skipping the "S's") which is how Uruguayans and Argentinians are recognized worldwide.

Tango is "reo" (streetwise) because lunfardo is "reo" because it is a musical style inspired by street talk; lunfardo is the language of the suburbs –the voice of the "arrabal".

Some emblematic names in Uruguayan tango are: Carlos Gardel, Julio Sosa, Lagrima Rios and Gustavo Nocetti.

Tango has also been fused with the murga rhythm here, important Uruguayan names of this style are: Jaime Roos and Los Mariados.

In the last few years female vocalists have also emerged: Malena Muyala, Francis Andreu, Valeria Lima, Maia Castro, Ana Carina Rossi, Giovanna as well as Laura Canoura are some of their names.

Ricardo Olivera is currently the most important male tango vocalist in Uruguay.

III) The National Comedy

The beginnings of the National Comedy were in 1911 when the Experimental Dramatic Arts School (Escuela Experimental de Arte Dramático) was opened by José Batlle y Ordóñez, during his second presidency.

In 1928 the Minister of Public Education (Instrucción Pública) Enrique Rodríguez Fabregat founded "La Casa del Arte" and put Angel Curotto and Carlos César Lenzi in charge.

Between 1942 and 1943, two theatre casts became very popular in the SODRE (State theatre): one was directed by Carlos Calderón de la Barca and the other by Margarita Xirgu, both had short seasons but left positive results in terms of exposure of new artists.

The need for an official national theatre cast was for a long time, a cause of constant concern for those linked to Montevideo's performing arts' scene. It was understood, and

quite rightly so, that the State could not remain indifferent to such an important cultural endeavour and what was more, its involvement was crucial to ensure its survival.

The initiative came from Angel Curotto and José Pedro Blixen Ramírez with the objective of joining forces to do something positive for actors and give theatre an injection of new life. With this in mind, they turned to Justino Zavala Muñiz, a dramaturge and government official, for his opinion; he gave them political, intellectual and moral support and promised to give the project his firm backing. Zavala Muñiz informed the mayor Andrés Martínez Trueba, who not long after gave the Project the thumbs up.

In April 1947 the Comisión de Teatros Municipales was created, presided by Justino Zavala Muñiz, who was asked to supervise the creation of the Comedia Nacional.

On **October 2nd 1947** the CN debuts with: “El León Ciego” by Ernesto Herrera, directed by Carlos Calderón de la Barca.

Its creation was crucial in determining the development of national theatre as well as freeing our theatre from the pressures of sponsors from the commercial scene in Buenos Aires. Since then, the Comedia has performed in the most diverse stages in Montevideo and despite being a municipal institution, for more than 60 years it has toured around the country as well as abroad creating national identity and presentation its style of making theatre.

The repertoire was originally aimed at supporting national authors, though with the arrival of Margarita Xirgu and José Struch, the classical Spanish authors became a speciality; later on with the appearance of Eduardo Schinca, the Anglo-Saxon and German authors appeared in the Comedia’s repertoire. The CN became a bastion for classical and national authors and in the recent period, for contemporary authors.

From the beginning, the Solis has been the CN’s “home” since together with the OFM, they are the resident casts.

Entry to the cast is by contest, although if actors with particular characteristics are required, they are named directly by municipal resolution. In these cases, the specific needs of the cast are taken into consideration as well as the background of the artist in question.

When the Escuela Municipal de Arte Dramático was founded, the best students with the highest qualifications, entered directly to the Comedia Nacional. This is impossible to implement today, given the large number of students in the school.

IV) Philharmonic Orchestra of Montevideo

In Uruguay there are two large symphonic orchestras: **The Symphonic Orchestra of the Sodre Theatre**, which is the State orchestra and **The Philharmonic Orchestra of Montevideo**, the Municipal orchestra.

Young artists make up the Orquesta Juvenil José Artigas and the Education and Culture Ministry’s Filarmónica Juvenil. The centenarian Banda Sinfónica Municipal plays a more popular repertoire.

The creation of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Montevideo was a long and difficult process. Three years before, the press and other documents of the time declare that for its creation, a decree by the City Hall authorities was necessary and that its original name was: “*Orquesta Sinfónica del Municipio*”. They also state that the orchestra was entrusted to: “take the most important music in terms of artistic hierarchy to all the neighbourhoods of Montevideo, giving everyone the opportunity to get to know and listen to this music.”

At that time, other institutes related to music and culture also emerged: the “Orquesta del Centro Cultural de Música”, Luis Sambucetti’s orchestra and the “Orquesta de Mujeres” (Women’s orchestra) “Afión”, etc. outside Montevideo, there was great interest in the creation of choirs and youth musical groups (Juventudes Musicales del Uruguay) which programmed activities around the country and abroad.

In 1953, the Minister of Public Education, Justino Zavala Muniz, encouraged the creation of the “Conservatorio Nacional de Música” which was directed by the Composer Carlos Estrada.

On 17th July 1959, the “Orquesta Sinfónica Municipal” directed by Carlos Estrada and Luis D` Andrea debuted at the Solis.

With the return to Democracy, the Maestro Federico García Vigil was appointed as Musical Director and in 1990; the SOM changed its name to [Orquesta Filarmónica de la Ciudad de Montevideo](#). Since then, the city’s orchestra has been distinguished within the country and abroad.

“La Filarmónica”, upholds the tradition of spreading music and art throughout society in open spaces, auditoriums and other less conventional venues. Some of its best-known performances are: “*Filarmónica cartoon*”, “*Galas de tango*”, “*MP3*”, “*Una noche de película*” and “*Una noche en Viena*”.

The current Artistic Director is..... and Álvaro Méndez is in charge of General Management.

V) The Russian Ballets

Serge de Diaghilev (Gruzino, Russia, 1872- Venice, 1929) was a Russian artistic director, impresario and art critic of Russian art. He was one of the key names in the renovation of ballet during the 20th century. He was responsible for founding the Russian Ballets in Paris in 1909, linked to the best artists, composers, dancers and choreographers of the time: Balanchine, Fokine, Karsavina, Massine, Nijinska, Nijinski, the Bakst, Benois, Braque, Derain, Matisse, Picasso and the Debussy, Falla, Prokofiev, Ravel, Satie, Strauss.

The great success of his shows, not exempt from scandal given his revolutionary and unorthodox artistic style, led to the discovery and endorsement of several young artists. One of them was Igor Stravinsky, whose collaboration with Diaghilev gave fruit to some of the paradigmatic performances in the contemporary music repertoire such as “The Fire Bird”, “Petrushka”, “The Consecration of Spring” (The Rite of Spring) and “Pulcinella”.