

JAVIER VILLÁN, MARÍA TOLEDO

Poetry: Javier Villán

Flamenco Singing: María Toledo

Poetry and song

MADRID

Complejo El Águila (El Águila Complex)

FRIDAY, JUNE 25TH AT 22:00

LA MÚSICA DE LOS ESPEJOS (THE MUSIC OF MIRRORS)

Good looking and well-built. She has a wonderful voice: round, full, incredibly pleasant and very suitable for flamenco. These are just some of the words of praise that one of our country's great flamenco critics has dedicated to María Toledo. This lawyer, pianist and *cantaora* (flamenco singer), is the new face of current-day flamenco.

He is a bullfighting and theater critic and poet. He has never been part of any group or let himself get carried away by any team or slogan. He follows the dictates of his own inner voice. For Javier Villán, a poem's ethical content would make no sense without an aesthetic task to back it up and sustain it.

Here we have put a poet who enjoys aesthetic beauty together with a flamenco beauty who has a lovely voice. Aren't we lucky?

Javier Villán Zapatero. This Palencia native was born in 1942. He is a poet and journalist as well as a bullfighting and theater critic for the newspaper *El Mundo*. He has single-handedly recovered an age-old Spanish journalistic tradition whereby bullfighting critics have tended to pursue other intellectual interests in addition to writing their chronicles.

Villán has cultivated the bullfighting theme in his essays, with books dedicated to César Rincón, Curro Vázquez and José Tomás. But, he has also written works about literature such as *Francisco Umbral, la escritura absoluta* (Francisco Umbral, Absolute Writing - 1996).

He has also written travel books, such as *Rumbo a Santiago* (On the Road to Santiago). *En Caneja: Una mirada del siglo XX* (En Caneja: A Look At the 20th Century- 2002) is a hybrid that blends the Palencia-born painter's biography with a personal diary.

In a series of autobiographical books entitled *Memoria sentimental de España* (An Emotional Memoir of Spain- 2000-2002) Villán explores diverse aspects of life under Franco's dictatorship: *Tole, catole, cuneta: los juegos de mi infancia perdida* (Games from My Childhood); *Sin pecado concebido: gozos y tribulaciones de un seminarista* (Conceived Without Sin: The Joys and Tribulations of a Seminarist); *Derecha jar!: la perra mili de un españolito* (Right: A Young Spaniard's Damned Military Service); *Y vinieron las suecas: tránsitos y lujurias de los años sesenta* (And the Swedes Came: Transits and Lusts of the 1970's).

He published his first collection of poetry, *La frente contra el muro* (Forehead Against the Wall) in 1975. The collection includes a great variety of themes and formats, although it is mostly characterized by free verse, on the one hand, and classic sonnets, on the other (especially sonnets following Quevedo's style).

Parábolas palestinas (Palestinian Paraboles) and *Sonetos de la impostura* (The Sonnets of Deception) are markedly political. Villán has also published collections of love poetry such as *Sonetos de fuego y nieve* (Sonnets of Fire and Snow- 2002) and poetry that uses bullfighting as a theme: *El fulgor del círculo* (The Circle's Glow-1988). *Memoria de insomnios* (Memory of Insomnia- 2001) combines prose and verse. Eleven books of poetry and one unpublished book: *Retablo de la muerte* (Death's Altarpiece) are included in the anthology *El corazón cruel de la ceniza* (Ash's Cruel Heart) published in 2007. This book contains poems written throughout the author's life (he has been writing poems for forty years) and has managed to recover a large part of his work that had sporadically appeared in minor, practically handcrafted, editions. In 2010 Villán presented *Aquelarre de sombras* (Witches' Sabbath of Shadows), his latest book of poems.

María Toledo is a performer with a powerful voice. She has an amazing mastery of vocal technique and knows a great deal about music. María attained a degree in Piano from the Jacinto Guerrero Conservatory in Toledo and sometimes accompanies her *cantes* (flamenco songs) from the piano bench. She won the Cante de las Minas New Artist Award. In 2003 she toured Japan with the Spanish National Ballet, María Jiménez became her mentor in RTVE and she sang flamenco back-ups for Rocío Jurado on her latest television program, *Rocío Siempre*.

Now Warner Music Spain has published her first album, *María Toledo*, a record full of nuances and details that explore the best aspects of flamenco, jazz and pop. *Cantaor* (flamenco singer) Arcángel, Diego del Morao, Carmen París, and La Shica participated in the recording. The album also includes a version of Nacha Pop's "Una décima de segundo". All of which goes to prove this performer's versatility.

María Toledo has shared the billboard with great masters such as Chano Lobato, El Pele, José Menese, Carmen Linares, Arcángel, Miguel Poveda, Chato de la Isla, Pansequito, La Macanita, José de la Tomasa, Terremoto, Diego "El Cigala", and Edith Salazar. She also added the vocals for Manolo Sanlúcar's show *Tres momentos para un concierto*.

She often participates in top-notch festivals such as Veranos de la Villa, Flamenco Viene del Sur, Flamenco Joven, Málaga's Biennial and Jerez's Festival. In addition, María has made a name for herself at prestigious flamenco *peñas* (folk clubs), she has illustrated conferences given by Félix Grande and sang as the *cantaora por cantiñas* (*alegrías, romeras, mirabrás* and *caracoles*) on guitarist Oscar Herrero's live videos.

Worth noting among the prizes recognizing her talent are: the Cantes de Compás First Prize at Mairena del Alcor (Sevilla), First Prize and the Special Prize for the Best *Cantaora* at Cádiz's Biennial, First Prize and Prize for Rarely Performed *Cantes* at La Fortuna, First Prize and Taranta Cante Matriz in Cartagena (Murcia), and the Saetas Award in Utrera (Sevilla).