

BENJAMÍN PRADO, ARGENTINA

Poetry: Benjamín Prado

Flamenco Singing: Argentina

Poetry and song

MADRID

Complejo El Águila (El Águila Complex)

TUESDAY, JUNE 22ND AT 22:00

LA MÚSICA DE LOS ESPEJOS (THE MUSIC OF MIRRORS)

With every song she sings, Argentina builds a closer bond with her audience. The beautiful tone of her deep voice is pure earthly power. She has the classic air of flamenco singers of old, yet delves wholeheartedly into the joy and merriment of more festive *palos* (flamenco styles).

A man who looks not unlike El Quixote, who enjoys watching Granada eat its meals through the glass windows at “Juanillo” in the Sacromonte district, who is quite capable of literally dying of laughter, going to bed at ungodly hours (because night-owls live longer), of encountering poems in a library, a slum, a whorehouse, or any other den of iniquity in any city... this can be none other than Benjamín Prado.

The *cantaora* (flamenco singer) writes many her own song lyrics. The poet also writes lyrics. And both of them express feelings like nobody else. It's a good combination for this summer that has only just begun. In this event, *La música de los espejos* (The Music of Mirrors) combines the Huelva-born singer's flamenco with the Madrid-native's poetry.

Benjamín Prado. This Spanish poet, essayist, and novelist was born in Madrid in 1961. Benjamín Prado has made a name for himself in the Spanish literary world, and his work has also aroused significant interest internationally. His work, especially his novels and essays, has been translated into several languages. His first novel, *Raro* (Strange- 1995), was an amazing success, not only in Spain, but also in countries such as Mexico, Argentina and Colombia. His next two novels: *Nunca le des la mano a un pistolero zurdo* (Never Shake Hands with a Left-Handed Gunman) and *Dónde crees que vas y quién te crees que eres* (Where Do You Think You're Going? And Who Do You Think You Are?), were both published in 1996. These works confirmed him as an indispensable writer for the new generations.

Prado is an excellent biographer who has written about contemporary writers and poets such as Teresa Klivesen and Anna Ajmátova, and has also written portraits of other authors such as Osip Mandelstam, Ingeborg Bachmann and Bob Dylan.

Among the essays he's written are, *Siete maneras de decir manzana* (Seven Ways to Say Apple) 2000 and *Los nombres de Antígona* (The Names of Antigone), which won him the José Ortega y Gasset Essay and Humanities Award in 2002. Other works of his include his memoirs, *A la sombra del ángel (trece años con Alberti)* (In the Angel's Shadow: Thirteen Years with Alberti) 2002, and his short stories collections *Jamás saldré vivo de este mundo* (I'll Never Get Out of this World Alive) 2003 and *La sangre nunca dice la verdad* (Blood Never Tells the Truth) 2007.

His poetic works have been compiled in the following volumes: *Ecuador* (1986-2001), *Iceberg*, published in 2002, and *Marea humana* (Human Tide), 2006. This last book won him the

Generación del '27 8th International Poetry Award. Benjamín Prado's literary talent has also been acknowledged with a Hiperión Poetry Award and with the 14th Andalucía Novel Award 1999 for his book *No sólo el fuego* (Not Just the Fire). In 2000, he published the novel *La nieve está vacía* (Snow is Empty) and his latest work, *Mala gente que camina* (Bad People Walking) was published in 2006.

In addition to being an important figure in the literary world, Benjamín Prado is also a key figure in the world of music. He has worked with singer-songwriter Joaquín Sabina on more than one occasion. That creative experience is palpable in albums such as *El hombre del traje gris* (The Man in the Grey Suit) and *Vinagre y rosas* (Vinegar and Roses). And, like Sabina, Prado admits that he's a soccer fan and has been known to claim that soccer is the only thing that helps him relax.

Argentina is not a stage name. It was her paternal grandmother's name. That is why it's only natural and understandable that her parents should have decided to name their second-born daughter Argentina María. This *cantaora* (flamenco singer) was born and raised in Huelva, in a neighborhood known as El Carmen, where her parents settled upon arrival from Galaroza and Linares de la Sierra. As a girl, Argentina became involved with music and developed her musical skills almost without realizing it. She would pretend she was hosting a radio show and recorded cassette tapes with her sister. She was thrilled to watch films featuring child prodigy Marisol, and often would repeat her favor scenes over and over again. But Argentina also has a lot to thank her maternal grandmother (Ana) for, since it was Ana who used to sing to her when she was a child and it was also she who passed on her passion for Andalusian folk culture.

At the still tender age of twenty-five, after years of studying, concerts, tours, recording sessions, and awards, this young *cantaora* (flamenco singer) has already established an impressive background. Despite her youth, she is already hardened by the many battles she has had to fight, and her work has been acknowledged by both audiences and specialized critics.