

ALMUDENA GRANDES, VALDERRAMA

Poetry: Almudena Grandes

Flamenco Singing: Valderrama

Poetry and song

MADRID

Complejo El Águila (El Águila Complex)

THURSDAY, JUNE 24TH AT 22:00

LA MÚSICA DE LOS ESPEJOS (THE MUSIC OF MIRRORS)

She began writing while her family watched soccer matches on TV. She is very committed, a fan of Madrid's Atlético soccer team, and she loves long meals with friends who are willing to have a laugh (friends who have no doubt tasted her famous potato salad). And all the better if the meal in question is by the bay in Cádiz. Critics say her work is sincere, overwhelming, expressive, that it's engaging and poignant, that she has a great gift for narrative, impeccable prose... This formidable woman is almost six feet tall (wearing heels). She is a dark-eyed brunette who looks quite capable of bossing anyone around. She's got a strong character. You could say Almudena Grandes is a lot like flamenco itself.

Accompanying her today is a singer who is anything but common and couldn't possibly be common, given his background. The artists he most admired were all listed in his parents' address book. He grew up surrounded by musicians, and this taught him to respect the audience and love his profession above all else. Being the son of Juanito Valderrama and Dolores Abril is far from a burden. For Valderrama, it is a privilege. He is discreet, a faithful friend who has managed to forge his own, solid, uncompromising style. He is truly the worthy bearer of a legendary surname.

Almudena Grandes. Almudena Grandes Hernández is one of the most relevant women writers of the last few generations. She was born in Madrid in 1960 and studied Geography and History at Madrid's Complutense University. She first began to work in the publishing field as a contributing writer. Her first novel *Las edades de Lulú (The Ages of Lulu)* was originally published in 1989 and it was a huge success. It is an erotic novel that won her the 11th Sonrisa Vertical Award. The novel has been translated into 20 languages and was also turned into a film by director Bigas Lunas.

Her narrative is "an astounding fresco that portrays the epic of everyday life, the pursuit of happiness, the realization of one's dreams, with remarkable authenticity and freshness." Many film directors have been drawn to her work, no doubt because they see that her fiction offers amazing stories worthy of being adapted for the screen, as has in fact occurred with most of her novels: *Malena es un nombre de Tango* (Malena is the Name of a Tango) 1994. The book was a finalist in the Narrative category for the Spanish Critics' Award and the National Literature Award. Director Gerardo Herrero turned it into a film in 1996, and in 2006 he shot another screenplay based on yet another of Almudena Grandes' works: *Los aires difíciles* (published in English as *The Wind from the East*) was originally published in 2002. In 2007, *Atlas de geografía humana* (Atlas of Human Geography- 1998) was adapted for the silver screen by the author's friend, director Azucena Hernández. And lastly, *Castillos de cartón* (Cardboard Castles), directed by

Salvador García Ruiz, was launched in October. The film is based on the novel published by Almudena Grandes in 2004 under the same name.

The last of Almudena Grandes' novels steers clear of her usual more contemporary realistic narrative in order to tell the story of two families from the end of the Spanish Civil War until the present day. The book is called *El corazón helado* (Frozen Heart- 2007) and the author herself considers it her most ambitious novel to date. The book won her the Madrid Booksellers Guild Book of the Year Award in 2007 and the José Manuel Lara Foundation's Best Novel Award in 2008.

In addition to her novels, Almudena Grandes has also published *Modelos de mujer* (Female Models- 1996), a compilation of seven short stories that had been previously published in different magazines and newspapers, one of which, *El lenguaje de los balcones* (The Language of Balconies), inspired by one of her husband Luis García Montero's poems, was adapted into a screenplay for the film *Aunque tú no lo sepas* (What You Never Knew- 2000) directed by Juan Vicente Córdoba. In 2003 she published *Mercado de Barceló* (Barceló Market), a selection of stories and tales taken from articles first published in the newspaper *El País*. And in 2005, she published another collection of short pieces in *Estaciones de paso* (Way Stations) a new compilation composed of five short stories about teenagers.

Almudena's work has also appeared in several collective works, such as *Libro negro de Madrid* (The Little Black Book of Madrid-1994), *Madres e hijas* (Mothers and Daughters- 1996) and *Érase una vez la paz* (Once Upon A Time There Was Peace - 1996), among others.

The strong point of this writer's narrative lies in her enormous capacity to create and define astoundingly vivid and authentic complex characters. The truth that emanates from her stories is based precisely on this creative capacity, which is what makes her one of the heirs of the 19th Century's greatest storytellers and of our best postwar novelists, to whom she has often affirmed she feels indebted.

Grandes is committed to various groups and has been a member of the Legado Andalusi Advisory Committee since 1998. She is a regular columnist for the newspaper *El País*.

Valderrama. Juan Antonio Valderrama Caballero was born in Madrid on June 24th 1972. He is the youngest child of one of our country's best-known artistic couples: Dolores Abril and Juanito Valderrama. Juan Antonio grew up surrounded by music, although he graduated from the University of Navarra with a degree in Journalism before embarking upon his musical career.

In addition to performing in live concerts and recording albums, Valderrama has also tried his hand as an actor with director José Luis García Sánchez in a film called *Franky Banderas* where he plays the role of Luis' Father.

Along with his wife, writer and filmmaker Rosa Peña, Valderrama wrote a history of the Los Chicos, one of the groups he most admires. He also put together a collection of his parents' work in music and film, which he published under his own record label.

All this without leaving aside his career in journalism; after collaborating as a commentator alongside Nieves Herrero on the RNE radio network for almost two years, he now has a weekly section on one of our country's highest-rated radio programs, "Herrera en la Onda", hosted by Carlos Herrera.

Valderrama is the heir to a musical tradition that is closely intertwined with our country's recent history. Little by little, he has managed to build a solid and uncompromising career as a musician. And this will no doubt eventually help him achieve what he initially set off to do, something that goes way beyond success, money, or fame: winning over people's hearts.